THE Nation.

FALL BOOKS

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Letters

Albert Shanker's UFT

New Haven, Conn.

I was as surprised to see myself keening for a "big tent" liberalism in Thomas J. Sugrue's "Albert Shanker Blows Up the World" [Nov. 12] as I imagine Sugrue was to see me holding forth elsewhere in the same issue of *The Nation*. And he may be more surprised by my review of Richard Kahlenberg's Shanker biography in the "big tent" *Democracy Journal* (www.democracyjournal.com) in December. I fault Shanker much as Sugrue does, especially on foreign policy, although Clay Risen, *Democracy Journal*'s managing editor, notes that Sugrue's Shanker seems to have slept more easily with his blunders than my Shanker did.

But I do insist that Shanker was wiser about race than the left, which used it tactically as a proxy for class (because law responded better) but also too often essentialized it, indulging impresarios of racialist street theater and a politics of racial paroxysm that dominated the 1980s and '90s. That buried, as Bull Connor never could, most blacks' uncompromising stance as the "omni-Americans" of Albert Murray's, Ralph Ellison's and Bayard Rustin's hopes, carriers of a civic-republican project in whose success they had the highest stakes but in whose failure many leftists, truth to tell, were deeply invested. Rustin, Michael Harrington and others were lonelier voices than Sugrue allows, with consequences for the left and the Democrats that Shanker foresaw and many historians and others on the left did not.

Jim Sleeper

Bronx, N.Y.

Thomas J. Sugrue does a good job summarizing the accomplishments and failings of Albert Shanker. But one glaring misconception prevents him from accurately assessing Shanker's motive for leading the infamous and destructive series of strikes in 1968. The teachers in Ocean Hill–Brownsville were not fired. They did not lose their licenses, salaries or status as teachers. They were referred to personnel for reassignment. They were involuntarily transferred. This had happened before. The UFT grieved, arbitrated, etc. but did not strike.

It is happening now on a vast scale, as the Department of Education "redesigns" and closes schools, dispersing at least half the teachers to schools unknown. Yet there is not a whisper about striking. The 1968 strikes were not about "hard-won work rules." The decentralization experiment threatened the power and control of Shanker and his UFT cohorts. There would be too many chances for new leadership and opposition voices to emerge in a decentralized system. Dealing with one all-powerful central authority complemented and supported the power of UFT leadership as a decentralized system could not.

Perhaps at first there was some concern about lack of due process for nineteen teachers, eventually ten. (Imagine the inanity and recklessness of bringing a great city to the brink of chaos over the assignment of ten teachers.) But as the crisis wore on it became an ugly, racially charged battle of will and raw power during which both sides rejected reasonable compromises. On the UFT side, the preservation of Shanker's power and the machine he built within the UFT dominated his actions. Nothing less than the destruction or severe dilution of decentralization would satisfy him.

Ultimately the strikes drove a wedge between blacks and liberal Jews, helping to fracture a longstanding alliance of electoral and social importance. Sugrue is right that this is Shanker's lasting and shameful legacy. Unfortunately, it was all for aggrandizement and power, not for union principle.

Edward Beller, *proud 1968 scab*
Former member, UFT executive board

Sugrue Replies

Philadelphia

I applaud Jim Sleeper's sharp criticism of liberal hawks in the same issue as my review. And I look forward to Sleeper on Shanker. But on the question of race, Sleeper has it all wrong. While some leftists essentialize race, and should be taken

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Showdown at the DMV

New York Governor Eliot Spitzer's original plan to issue driver's licenses to undocumented immigrants should have been an example of practical and modest good government.

EDITORIAL

It had nothing to do with "amnesty," pathways to citizenship, border control, guest workers or employer sanctions; it merely attempted, in the absence of rational federal immigration policy, to guarantee a competent and insured driver behind the wheel of every New York car. As a matter of public safety, it garnered the dry-eyed support of nonpartisans like the New York State Catholic Conference, the *New York Times* and former counterterrorism czar Richard Clarke, as well as the libertarian Cato Institute. Similar plans have been implemented in eight states, including New Mexico, Oregon and Maryland. So what happened on the road to the DMV?

Many factors doomed Spitzer's effort, his squandered political capital among them. His compromise plan—to create three levels of licenses, one of which would have been the federal Real ID—pleased nobody. But mostly, his proposal came undone in the maelstrom of intense pressure from conservatives, lackluster support from progressives, right-wing nativism and the distorting glare of the 2008 presidential campaign. Its demise may be a harbinger of ugly politics to come.

From the moment Spitzer announced his proposal, Lou Dobbs and his shock-jock clones on drive-time radio launched a vicious smear campaign. Dobbs characterized the plan as a sanctuary program for 9/11 terrorists. New York State Assembly minority leader James Tedisco asserted that "somewhere in a cave with his den of thieves and terrorists" Osama bin Laden was celebrating with champagne. Monroe County Republicans distributed a flier of a turbaned man with an assault rifle slung over his shoulder under the headline Democrat County Legislators Want to Make It Easier for Illegals and Terrorists to Get Driver's Licenses!

It is disturbing that so few progressives were prepared to tackle such crass fearmongering and racism. Indeed, Hillary Clinton's tacit embrace, then equivocation, then ultimate rejection of Spitzer's plan turned it into a political hot potato, one discussed in terms of "electoral math" and "gotcha" politics rather than its merits. At the Democratic presidential debate in Nevada, home to 200,000 undocumented immigrants, CNN moderator Wolf Blitzer broached the topic only to turn it into a squabble over whether Clinton had engaged in the "politics of parsing." When Blitzer finally got to the issue itself, he demanded a yes-or-no answer—much to the chagrin of Barack Obama (yes) and John Edwards (no), who engaged in plenty of parsing themselves.

At best such a framework turns the issue of driver's licenses into a proxy for the unsettled and complex issue of national immigration reform. At worst it makes a conversation on immigration almost impossible. Who will fill the service, agrarian and high-tech jobs upon which the economy depends? Should workers in the most dangerous and difficult jobs be cut off from basic labor protections? Considering our growing economic anxieties, how should progressives seek to reform immigration so that the standards of *all* workers are lifted?

These are but some of the questions that merit discussion, not as a means of triangulating or courting the Hispanic vote but as a matter of fairness and principle. Progressives can begin by opposing the Real ID Act, which contains anti-immigrant provisions. Since many Democrats feel vulnerable on immigration, those in safe seats can and should take the lead on fair and humane reforms. Most important, progressives should frame immigration as a moral issue, not merely a political

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Evan Cornog: *Lapham's Quarterly* Makes Its Debut
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NATION POLL
What political event of the past year are you most thankful for?

VIDEO NATION
Katrina vanden Heuvel: The Costs of War

RADIONATION
Student Journalism Panel: John Nichols, David Cole, Dahlia Lithwick

one. Any expansion of American citizenship to excluded minorities—such as African-Americans or women—has always been hard-fought. It took courage and vision to make the unlikely and unpopular seem a matter of common sense and justice. It will this time, too.

Hands Off Iran

COMMENT

I will not pay my income tax if we go to war with Iran. I realize this is a desperate and perhaps futile gesture. But an attack on Iran—which appears increasingly likely before the coming presidential election—will unleash a regional conflict of catastrophic proportions. This war, and especially Iranian retaliatory strikes on American targets, will be used to silence domestic dissent and abolish what is left of our civil liberties. It will solidify the slow-motion coup d'état that has been under way since the 9/11 attacks. It could mean the death of the Republic.

Let us hope sanity prevails. But sanity is a rare commodity in a White House that has twisted Trotsky's concept of permanent revolution into a policy of permanent war with nefarious aims—to intimidate and destroy all those classified as foreign opponents, to create permanent instability and fear and to strip citizens of their constitutional rights.

A war with Iran is doomed. It will be no more successful than the Israeli airstrikes on Lebanon in 2006, which failed to break Hezbollah and united most Lebanese behind that militant group. The Israeli bombing did not pacify 4 million Lebanese. What will happen when we begin to pound a country of 65 million people whose land mass is three times the size of France?

Once you begin an air campaign it is only a matter of time before you have to put troops on the ground or accept defeat, as the Israelis had to do in Lebanon. And if we begin dropping bunker busters and cruise missiles on Iran, this is the choice that must be faced: either send US forces into Iran to fight a protracted and futile guerrilla war, or walk away in humiliation.

But more ominous, an attack on Iran will ignite the Middle East. The loss of Iranian oil, coupled with possible Silkworm missile attacks by Iran against oil tankers in the Persian Gulf, could send the price of oil soaring to somewhere around $200 a barrel. The effect on the domestic and world economy will be devastating, very possibly triggering a global depression. The Middle East has two-thirds of the world's proven petroleum reserves and nearly half its natural gas. A disruption in the supply will be felt immediately.

This attack will be interpreted by many Shiites in the Middle East as a religious war. The 2 million Shiites in Saudi Arabia (heavily concentrated in the oil-rich Eastern Province), the Shiite majority in Iraq and the Shiite communities in Bahrain, Pakistan and Turkey could turn in rage on us and our dwindling allies. We could see a combination of increased terrorist attacks, including on American soil, and widespread sabotage of oil production in the Persian Gulf. Iraq, as bad as it looks now, will become a death pit for US troops. The Supreme Islamic Iraqi Council, which has so far not joined the insurgency, has strong ties to Iran. It could begin full-scale guerrilla resis-

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Noted.

COUNSEL FOR THE LEFT: We note with great admiration the life of **Victor Rabinowitz**, champion of and lawyer to the left for nearly seven decades, who died at the age of 96 on November 16. His grandson, **Michael Rabinowitz**, who carries on in Victor's spirit as a political director at UNITE HERE, offered these words:

"My grandfather was someone who participated in a million (almost literally, it seems) good fights to make the world better—in organizations from the **National Lawyers Guild** to the **American Labor Party** in New York. He provided legal representation to unions from **1199** to the **Teamsters**, civil rights activists, the **Black Panthers** and left-wing governments like **Salvador Allende**'s in Chile. Wherever there was a left, he was of it. While he knew the world was many shades of gray, he also knew there was a right and a wrong. And he relished taking a stand for right—even (perhaps especially) if it was unpopular. As I think about my grandfather, I will treasure the great personal memories—the baseball games, the free legal advice and the smile he'd form when he was about to make a particularly devastating argument. But what will live on, what he has passed on to me, is that it's not enough to believe the right rhetoric—you have to get your hands dirty. Victor was my moral and political compass, and that's something that will never die."

TWO NATIONS: A recent *New York Times*/CBS poll of voters in Iowa and New Hampshire revealed that America is indeed a deeply polarized country, not when it comes to abortion or other hot-button social issues but on a matter often thought to be of broad concern: national security. According to the poll, 30 percent of Republicans in Iowa and 29 percent in New Hampshire rank national security as the most important issue in deciding which candidate they'll support next year. But just 6 percent of New Hampshire Dems and 3 percent of Iowa Dems feel this way. On no other issue is the gap so wide, a fact about which the *Times* was curiously silent. What might account for the chasm?

One possibility is that seven years into the Bush era, Democrats have come to associate "national security" with torture, secret prisons, wiretapping and official lies. Another is that for many voters, security isn't about projecting hard or soft power abroad. It's about dealing with problems (poverty, disease, environmental degradation) that aren't amenable to war, and worrying less about spreading our values to other countries. Healthcare, the economy and the environment all ranked ahead of national security among Democrats' concerns. Republicans might take this as a sign that the left is naïve about grave dangers in the world. Democrats running for President might view it as proof that, as **William D. Hartung** has suggested in these pages, the time has come to avoid the "toughness trap" and to redefine security as something other than a willingness to pour hundreds of billions of dollars into more weapons and wars. EYAL PRESS

WINTER SOLDIERS RETURN: During the darkest days of the American Revolution, **Thomas Paine** wrote, "These are the times that try men's souls. The summer soldier and the sunshine patriot will, in this crisis, shrink from the service of their country; but he that stands it now, deserves the love and thanks of man and woman."

The notion of the winter soldier, the patriot who recognizes a duty to stand for what is right even when it is not easy, was taken up by **Vietnam Veterans Against the War** at a point when politicians and media outlets attempted to downplay the horrors of the conflict in Southeast Asia. The VVAW's call for a **Winter Soldier Investigation** drew more than 100 vets to Detroit in January 1971. Their testimony destroyed the fantasy that the war was a noble, necessary mission. In so doing, those vets identified themselves as the true descendants of the winter soldiers who fought with Washington at Valley Forge.

Almost thirty-seven years after the first Winter Soldier Investigation comes the call from **Iraq Veterans Against the War** for a new inquiry into atrocities in Iraq and Afghanistan. They ask veterans and nonvets alike to sign a statement of support for troops who oppose the war. It reads:

"The U.S. Government lied to get us into war and continues to conceal the true nature of military occupation. On the weekend of 13-15 March, 2008, Iraq Veterans Against the War will assemble history's largest gathering of US veterans of Iraq and Afghanistan, as well as Iraqi and Afghan survivors. They will provide first hand accounts of their experiences and reveal the truth of occupation. We support Iraq Veterans Against the War and their Winter Soldier: Iraq & Afghanistan Investigation. Join us in supporting the effort to reveal truth in the way that only those who lived it can."

The full statement can be read, and signed, on the IVAW website. JOHN NICHOLS

DEFENDING LABOR IN COLOMBIA: As Congress considers a US-Colombia free-trade agreement, human rights objections raised by unions have taken center stage. In the past sixteen years, more than 2,000 Colombian union members have been murdered, but less than forty cases have led to convictions; at least 400 killings took place on the watch of President **Álvaro Uribe**, who has been slow to launch investigations. Uribe's former intelligence head, **Jorge Noguera**, is charged with providing a list of union members to right-wing paramilitary assassins. Meanwhile, more information is emerging about the connections between paramilitaries and US corporations. **Chiquita Brands International** recently admitted to paying nearly $2 million to such groups. The **International Labor Rights Fund** is appealing the acquittal of Alabama-based mining company **Drummond**, which was charged with conspiracy in the killings of **Valmore Locarno Rodríguez** and **Victor Hugo Orcasita**, president and vice president of a northern Colombia mineworkers local.

Murders of union members are down since the '90s, and the government has appointed a special prosecutor to look into the killings. Nevertheless, more union members were murdered in Colombia last year than in any other country in the world. That should be reason enough to reject preferred trade status for the world's most dangerous place for organized labor. MATTHEW BLAKE

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tance, possibly uniting for the first time with Sunnis against the occupation. Iran, in retaliation, will fire its missiles, some with a range of 1,100 miles, at US installations, including Baghdad's Green Zone. Expect substantial casualties, especially with Iranian agents and their Iraqi allies calling in precise coordinates. Iranian missiles could be launched at Israel. The Strait of Hormuz, which is the corridor for 20 percent of the world's oil supply, will become treacherous, perhaps unnavigable. Chinese-supplied antiship missiles, mines and coastal artillery, along with speedboats packed with explosives and suicide bombers, will target US shipping, along with Saudi oil production and oil export centers.

Hezbollah forces in southern Lebanon, closely allied with Iran, may in solidarity fire rockets into northern Israel. Israel, already struck by missiles from Tehran, could then carry out retaliatory raids against both Lebanon and Iran. Pakistan, with its huge Shiite minority, will become even more unstable. Unrest could result in the overthrow of the already weakened Pervez Musharraf and usher Islamic radicals into power. Pakistan, rather than Iran, would then become the first radical Islamic state to possess a nuclear weapon. The neat little war with Iran, which many Democrats do not oppose, has the potential to ignite an inferno.

George W. Bush has shredded, violated or absented America from its obligations under international law. He has refused to ratify the Kyoto Protocol, backed out of the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty, tried to kill the International Criminal Court, walked out on negotiations on chemical and biological weapons and defied the Geneva Conventions and human rights law in the treatment of detainees. Most egregious, he launched an illegal war in Iraq based on fabricated evidence we now know had been discredited even before it was made public. He seeks to do the same in Iran.

This President is guilty, in short, of what in legal circles is known as the "crime of aggression." And if we as citizens do not hold him accountable for this crime, if we do not actively defy this government, we will be complicit in the codification of a new world order, one that will have terrifying consequences. For a world without treaties, statutes and laws is a world where any nation, from a rogue nuclear state to a great imperial power, will be able to invoke its domestic laws to annul its obligations to others. This new order will undo five decades of international cooperation—largely put in place by the United States—and thrust us into a Hobbesian nightmare. We must as citizens make sacrifices to defend a world where diplomacy, broad cooperation and the law are respected. If we allow these international legal systems to unravel, we will destroy the possibility of cooperation between nation-states, including our closest allies.

The strongest institutional barrier standing between us and a war with Iran is being mounted by Defense Secretary Robert Gates; Adm. William Fallon, head of the Central Command; and Gen. George Casey, the Army's new chief of staff. These three men have informed Bush and Congress that the military is too depleted to take on another conflict and may not be able to contain or cope effectively with a regional conflagration resulting from strikes on Iran. This line of defense, however, is tenuous. Not only can Gates, Fallon and Casey easily be replaced but a provocation by Iran could be used by war propagandists here to stoke a public clamor for revenge.

A country that exists in a state of permanent war cannot exist as a democracy. Our long row of candles is being snuffed out. We may soon be in darkness. Any resistance, however symbolic, is essential. There are ways to resist without being jailed. If you owe money on your federal tax return, refuse to pay some or all of it, should Bush attack Iran. If you have a telephone, do not pay the 3 percent excise tax. If you do not owe federal taxes, reduce what is withheld by claiming at least one additional allowance on your W-4 form—and write to the IRS to explain the reasons for your protest. Many of the details and their legal ramifications are available on the War Resisters League's website (www.warresisters.org/wtr.htm).

I will put the taxes I owe in an escrow account. I will go to court to challenge the legality of the war. Maybe a courageous judge will rule that the Constitution has been usurped and the government is guilty of what the postwar Nuremberg tribunal defined as a criminal war of aggression. Maybe not. I do not know. But I do know this: I have friends in Tehran, Gaza, Beirut, Baghdad, Jerusalem and Cairo. They will endure far greater suffering and deprivation. I want to be able, once the slaughter is over, to at least earn the right to ask for their forgiveness.

CHRIS HEDGES

Chris Hedges, former Middle East bureau chief for the New York Times *and a senior fellow at The Nation Institute, is the author, most recently, of* American Fascists: The Christian Right and the War on America *(Free Press).*

Calvin Trillin, Deadline Poet

Judith Regan's Lawsuit Against Fox News

According to the lawsuit filed by Judy,
While she and Kerik did some stuff that's lewd, he
Revealed some juicy dirt on his friend Rudy.
If so, this could put Rudy in deep doody.

Studs's People

One day in 1974, I got a call from my agent. "I've got an idea," she said. "What if you did a book of interviews on unemployment, like Studs Terkel's *Working*, only with people out of a job?" So I bought a tape recorder, tried my hand at "oral history" and found I loved the interview crucible, the savor of creating in collaboration as a long conversation clicks. I traveled around the country, and after some vicissitudes, *Not Working* was published in 1979. I stole not only Studs's technique and format but also his title. Whereupon he called me up

COMMENT

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and asked me to appear on his radio show.

Soon there we were, across a table in the WFMT studio, the celebrated author of *Working* interviewing the rookie author of *Not Working*, Studs voluble, fizzy with energy. He quickly zeroed in on something I had remarked upon: that no matter how people lose their job, even if they have been laid off with hundreds or thousands of others, they usually feel a sense of failure and shame, that somehow it is their fault. Studs saw the suffering in that, and saw that it stems, at least in part, from the American every-man-for-himself ethos we breathe in from the cradle. That fit with what I knew about Studs from reading his books and what comes through so strongly in his latest, the memoir *Touch and Go*: instinctive empathy wedded to a blazing sense of right and wrong.

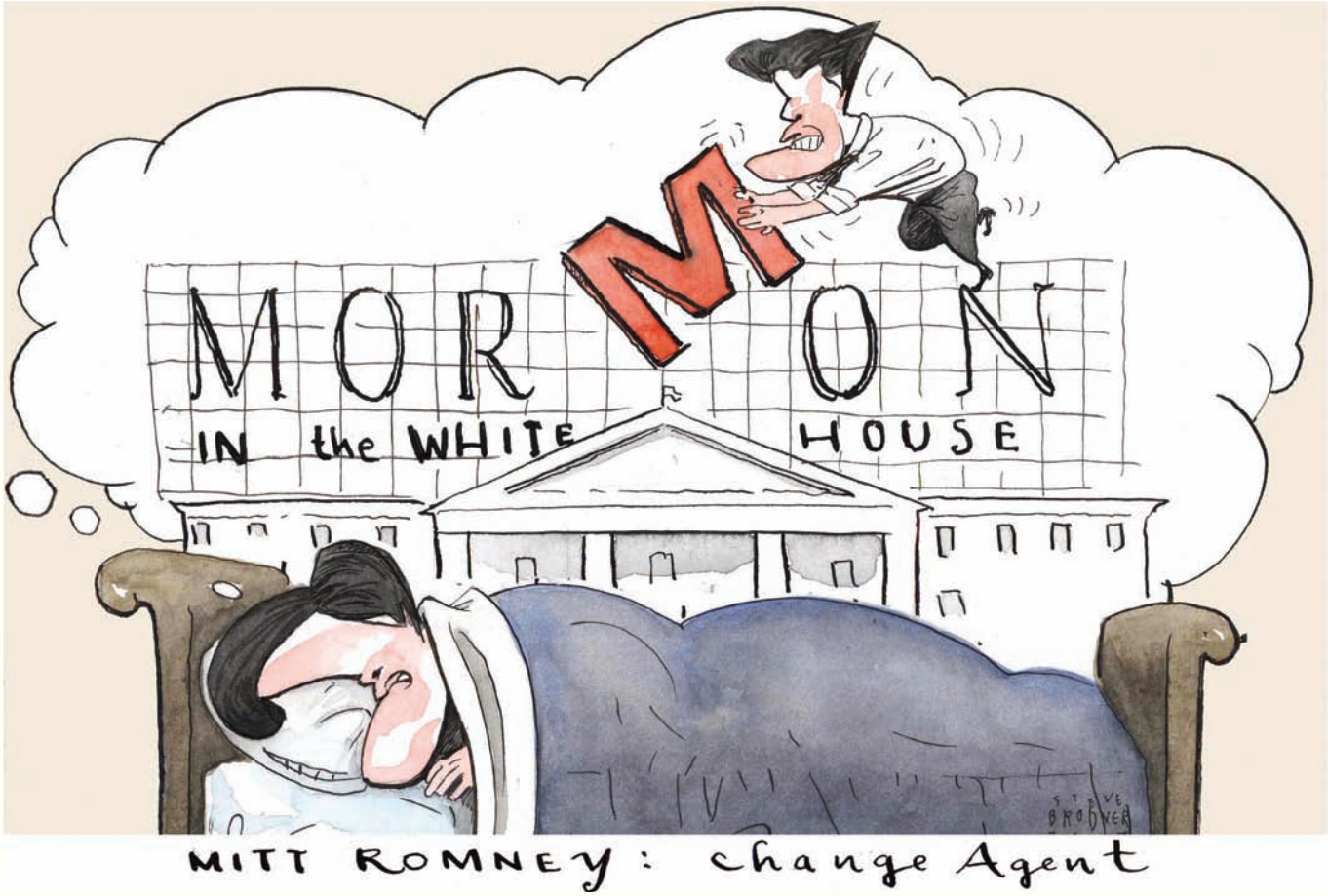
My next book was an oral history of the American involvement in Vietnam. Studs reviewed it and again invited me on his show. This time what interested him most, in a 600-page tome, were the first few interviews, with soldiers and journalists and diplomats who worked in Vietnam between 1945 and 1954, from the last months of World War II to the battle of Dien Bien Phu. Some of them vainly urged Washington to back Ho Chi Minh's plea for independence and oppose France's war to reclaim its colony. Studs was fascinated by those present at that turning point, who tried to shift their country from a course they sensed would bring catastrophe.

I should have guessed those particular interviews would grab Studs. His great subject has always been the individual immersed in, and striving to turn, the currents of history. Maybe that's because he has lived so much history himself. First his own domestic history: growing up in a low-end Chicago hotel managed by his parents, listening to the boarders talk of politics and their lives. Then the history of most of the twentieth century, which at 95 he not only remembers but was often fiercely engaged in. And the history that inflames Studs is not confined to what he witnessed. His pages in *Touch and Go* on the Haymarket riot, which occurred in Chicago in 1886 and resulted in a farcical trial and the hanging of four innocents, radiate the same outrage he feels at, say, the beating of Martin Luther King Jr. in Montgomery, Alabama, in 1955.

If the individual in history is Studs's theme, his central preoccupation—his métier, one could say—is memory. He quotes (twice) the famous James Baldwin passage from *The Fire Next Time*: "History does not refer merely…to the past. On the contrary, the great force of history comes from the fact that we carry it within us, are unconsciously controlled by it in many ways, and history is literally present in all that we do." The unconsciousness Baldwin refers to drives Studs crazy. "Forgetfulness," he says. "That is what haunts me at the moment." The truth is that historical amnesia has always obsessed him. My favorite story from *Touch and Go* concerns a well-dressed young

Comix Nation

by STEVE BRODNER



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couple Studs encounters repeatedly at his bus stop. He's irritated by their refusal to engage with him. Finally he provokes them by saying something about Labor Day, and the man sniffs, "We despise unions." Studs asks how many hours a day he works. Eight, comes the answer. Studs wades in, invoking Haymarket: "How come you only work the eight-hour day? Four guys got hanged fighting for the eight-hour day for you."

So the touchstone is memory, and the material, the stuff of which Studs's art is made, is speech. "I like to hear conversation," he writes, which is like Tiger Woods saying, "I like to play golf." Studs has spent his long life listening—that is, the part of his life when he wasn't being a law student, actor, script writer, disc jockey, jazz critic and activist, the part of his life when he wasn't turning his zillion tapes into, impossibly, seventeen books. Among the first of those, *Division Street: America* and *Hard Times*, perfected a form that has since been taken up by hundreds of writers, all of us, for better or worse, Studs's offspring. But few oral histories can match Studs's own, because few of us bring what he does to the interviewing table.

The dirty little secret of oral history—well, maybe it's not such a secret—is that it's not just about listening. It's about connection (Studs says people open up to him because he makes them "feel needed"), about dialogue, about who-I-am meeting who-you-are. By daring to ask the scary question, by revealing what moves him or her, the interviewer nudges, or downright shunts, the talk in a certain direction. Here Studs excels because his singularity is so strong, his passions legion and unabashed and his judgments held in check. And then there's the matter of editing. Studs has an ear for the eloquence of just folks, the people he likes to call "the et ceteras." But few subjects are eloquent unedited. Once Studs has the raw stuff on tape, he knows how to craft it so the eloquence comes through.

In August 1963 Studs and his wife, Ida, rode a special train to the March on Washington. Studs naturally packed his tape recorder and spent the ride interviewing. He quotes a man named Simpson: "My wife and my grandchildren, they say, 'Why you going? You can see it on television.' [I] said, 'I don't want to see it, I wants to be in it.'" Then Studs writes, "That was the thing I remember most strongly, the voices of people wanting to make a difference." By giving us their voices, and teaching many others to do the same, Studs has made an incalculable difference. HARRY MAURER

Harry Maurer is the author of three oral histories: Not Working: An Oral History of the Unemployed*;* Strange Ground: Americans in Vietnam, 1945–1975*; and* Sex: An Oral History.

Moyers & FDR

Bill Moyers gave the following remarks at the Franklin and Eleanor Roosevelt Institute's twentieth-anniversary Four Freedoms ceremony, where he received the Freedom of Speech award. —The Editors

Thank you for this recognition and the spirit of the evening. Thanks especially for giving me the chance to sit here awhile thinking about my father. Henry Moyers was an ordinary man who dropped out of the fourth grade because his family needed him to pick cotton to help make ends meet. The Depression knocked him off the farm and flat on his back. When I was born he was making two dollars a day working on the highway to Oklahoma City. He never made over $100 a week in the whole of his working life, and he made that only when he joined the union on the last job he held. He voted for Franklin Roosevelt in four straight elections, and he would have gone on voting for him until kingdom come if both had lived that long. I once asked him why, and he said, "Because the President's my friend." Now, my father never met FDR. No politician ever paid him much note, but he was sure he had a friend in the White House during the worst years of his life. When by pure chance I wound up working there many years later, and my parents came for a visit, my father wanted to see the Roosevelt Room. I don't know quite how to explain it, except that my father knew who was on his side and who wasn't, and for twelve years he had no doubt where FDR stood. The first time I remember him with tears in his eyes was when Roosevelt died. He had lost his friend.

COMMENT

We can't revive the man and certainly we wouldn't want to revisit the times, but we can rekindle the spirit. There are 37 million people in this country who are poor; there are 57 million who are near poor, making $20,000 to $40,000 a year—one divorce, one pink slip, one illness away from a free fall. That's almost one-third of America still living on the edge. They need a friend in the White House. My father, with his fourth-grade education and two fingers with the missing tips from the mix-up at the cotton gin, got it when Roosevelt spoke. "I can't talk like him," he said, "but I sure do think like him." My father might not have had the words for it, but he said amen when FDR talked about economic royalism. Sitting in front of our console radio, he got it when Roosevelt said that private power no less than public power can bring America to ruin in the absence of democratic controls.

Don't think for a moment he didn't get it when Roosevelt said that a government by money was as much to be feared as a government by mob, or when he said that the political equality we once had won was meaningless in the face of economic inequality. My father got it when he heard his friend in the White House talk about how "a small group had concentrated into their own hands an almost complete control over other people's property, other people's money, other people's labor—other people's lives." My father knew FDR was talking for him when he said life was no longer free, liberty no longer real, men could no longer follow the pursuit of happiness—against economic tyranny such as this. And my father listened raptly when his friend the President said, "The American citizen"—my father knew the President was speaking of him—"could appeal only to the organized power of government."

So thank you for reminding us that liberalism is less about ideology and doctrine than about friendship and faith—the bond between a patrician in the White House and a working man on the Texas-Oklahoma border and their mutual belief in America as a shared project. Thank you for this reminder of how we might yet turn the listing ship of state. My father thanks you, too. BILL MOYERS

Bill Moyers is a journalist.

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Eric Alterman

Debating for Dummies

I've seen debates on TV before, of course, and attended them from journalists' pens and spin rooms. But sitting in the audience of CNN's November 15 Democratic presidential debate at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas, focused my mind on the egregious manner in which our media dumb down the process by which we pick our Presidents.

It was less a debate than a two-hour advertisement; not only did viewers see CNN = Politics graphics everywhere but unbeknownst to the television audience a network producer ran around the stage, ginning up the crowd like a high school cheerleader. (This backfired when a group of rowdies—angered by the inanity of the questions—shouted down Wolf Blitzer and some candidates and had to be removed from the auditorium.)

From the start it was obvious that Blitzer & Co. had little interest in illuminating the candidates' positions on actual issues; they sought merely to create controversy. The first part of the debate was given over to attacks on, and counterattacks from, Hillary Clinton—a surefire newsmaker that left the other candidates twiddling their thumbs. Next Blitzer went down the line, demanding to know whether the candidates supported driver's licenses for undocumented immigrants, apparently unaware that licenses are the province of governors and state legislators, not Presidents. When Barack Obama tried to outline his overall approach to immigration in response, Blitzer repeatedly cut him off. ("Is that a yes or a no?" was a typical Blitzer interruption.)

Blitzer also demanded an up-or-down answer from members of the panel on the question of merit pay for teachers, another issue for which the Constitution gives the President no role whatsoever. What's more, Blitzer's reductive formulation—"What if there's an excellent teacher in that team and a crummy teacher?"—failed to define who would make the decision, what criteria would be used and how they might be implemented. This turned out to be the moderator's modus operandi. Discussing the future of Pakistan, for instance, Blitzer reduced the question to the purely theoretical and profoundly misleading "Is human rights more important than American national security?"—as if the two were somehow contradictory by definition and either answer might plot out a plan in Pakistan.

As is so often the case in MSM election coverage, CNN's hectoring of the Democratic candidates reflected an unconscious internalization of Republican Party talking points. As Michael Kinsley pointed out during the 2004 Democratic convention, "It's true enough that this is a moment when the Democrats are called upon to reject extreme liberalism (whatever that might be) and to embrace moderation. But that is only because every moment is such a moment." He termed this meme "one of the very safest in all of punditry," which, as the old song goes, is *really* saying something. So we heard Blitzer robotically repeating, "The teachers' union, very powerful—teachers' unions, very powerful" before inquiring of Dennis Kucinich, "Are there any issues with unions—teachers' unions, or other unions for that matter—with which you disagree?" (Leave aside the fact that Blitzer apparently believes that all unions agree with one another on everything; are Republican candidates routinely asked to disassociate themselves from conservative Christians or the Fortune 500?)

The same syndrome was evident when, after a woman in the audience posed a question about what qualities the candidates would seek in a Supreme Court Justice, Blitzer and Suzanne Malveaux reinterpreted her question to restrict its scope to whether each would "require" judges "to support abortion rights." Of course, the questioner might have been interested in FISA, rendition, torture or the Bush Administration's multipronged assault on our constitutional rights, but where's the buzz factor there? Not only did CNN's anchors deliberately distort the woman's question; they replaced it with one posed within a hostile linguistic framework. Democrats, as we are all aware, speak of the issue as one of "reproductive freedom," "choice" or, as it is defined in *Roe v. Wade*, Americans' "right to privacy." The way Blitzer rephrased Malveaux's original distortion—demanding to know whether the Democrats would "insist" that judicial nominees "support abortion"—he might as well have been addressing a right-to-life rally.

We saw a similar dynamic every time voters were invited to ask a question: their concerns were ignored as Blitzer and Malveaux twisted their inquiries into "gotcha" traps. When an Arab-American asked an impassioned question about airport racial profiling, Malveaux used his story to try to trip up John Edwards. "You obviously voted for the Patriot Act, which gives the government extended powers of surveillance," she explained. "What do you say to people like Mr. Khan, who says he's been abused by that power?" Yet Mr. Khan never mentioned the Patriot Act, which, as Joe Biden finally noted, has little or nothing to do with racial profiling.

The night's final absurdity came at the evening's close, when a UNLV student was given the microphone and asked Hillary Clinton whether she preferred diamonds or pearls. Sitting in the audience, I was among those who thought her idiotic inquiry shamed both herself and her university. Yet it turns out I was being unfair. As she later explained on her MySpace page, she had been planning to ask a question about nuclear waste storage at Yucca Mountain, but at the last minute she was instructed by a CNN producer to switch her question to diamonds and pearls, which she had submitted in advance when asked by the network to provide questions of a "lighthearted/fun" nature. The folks at CNN apparently considered this inquiry to be such a stroke of genius they chose it as their lead story for the website the following day, under the headline Diamonds or pearls: Clinton wants both.

Really, Democrats, there's gotta be a better way. ■

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Books & the Arts.

DOUG CHAKYA

Deal Breakers

by KIM PHILLIPS-FEIN

In the spring of 1960, several months before the presidential election of that year, a small, slim volume by the junior senator from Arizona, Barry Goldwater, hit the bookstores. The brief manifesto, appropriately titled *The Conscience of a Conservative*, tried to reclaim the idea of conservatism from the disrepute into which it had fallen ever since the victories of the New Deal. Conservatism was not, Goldwater insisted, a "narrow, mechanistic economic theory." Its adherents were not greedy businessmen, eager to protect their own privileges. Rather, conservatism was a political philosophy determined to stave off the intrusions of the state and expand the boundaries of freedom. Far from being preoccupied with wealth, conservatism, wrote Goldwater, "puts material things in their proper place."

Many ironies surrounded the publication of *The Conscience of a Conservative*. Despite Goldwater's claim that conservatism had nothing to do with wealth or privilege, the book's publication had been financed by a small group of intensely antiunion businessmen who hoped to publicize their political views and encourage Goldwater to seek the presidency. They even connected him with *National Review* editor L. Brent Bozell (brother-in-law of the magazine's editor in chief, William F. Buckley Jr.), who ghostwrote the book. In the end, *Conscience* became a surprising success, hitting the bestseller lists two months after publication and helping conservatism shed its image as the stingy, small-minded politics of businessmen opposed to labor unions and the welfare state. Rarely has a book played as critical a role in building a movement.

Two new books seek to have the galvanizing impact on liberals and progressives that Goldwater's did on conservatives in 1960. *The Conscience of a Liberal*, by Princeton economist and *New York Times* op-ed columnist Paul Krugman, puts forward a vision of liberalism as a populist politics of opposition to economic inequality, not the foppish, sentimental cultural elitism mocked by the right. *The Big Con*, by *New Republic* senior editor Jonathan Chait, seeks to demonstrate that for all its posturing, conservatism really is the politics of business and wealth, and that its truest believers are more obsessed with tax cuts than

The Conscience of a Liberal
By Paul Krugman.
Norton. 296 pp. $25.95.

The Big Con
The True Story of How Washington Got Hoodwinked and Hijacked by Crackpot Economics.
By Jonathan Chait.
Houghton Mifflin. 294 pp. $25.

Kim Phillips-Fein is an assistant professor at the Gallatin School of New York University. Her first book, Invisible Hands: The Making of the Conservative Movement From the New Deal to Reagan, *is forthcoming in 2009.*

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abortion or gay marriage. Most Americans, Krugman and Chait say, don't really support the conservative economic agenda; they would like the government to do more, not less. Nor are they duped into voting for that agenda by their fanatical hatred of feminism and gay rights (although Krugman, especially, does emphasize the role of racism in winning popular support for an elitist economic agenda). Rather, the real reason for the strength of the right in American politics is its connection to a small group of businessmen, and their intellectual allies, who want to undo the New Deal and restore the laissez-faire, nonunion economy of the late nineteenth century. These "economic royalists" have captured the Grand Old Party and driven out the moderate Republicans of yesteryear. Unlike Thomas Frank, Krugman and Chait don't think that the crucial problems of contemporary politics can be traced to culture wars in Kansas. They focus instead on the conservative business lobby and its enablers in Washington.

Krugman and Chait don't fully appreciate the truly exceptional origins of New Deal policies.

Krugman and Chait offer passionate and persuasive critiques of the ways economic inequality corrodes American politics and life. They are willing to take on the conservative movement with a ferocity that most mainstream liberals shied away from only a couple of years ago. And because their interpretation of the rise of the conservative movement shifts attention away from cultural conflict to struggles over economic power, their books offer a welcome change from the portrayal of America as divided between the traditionalism of the heartland and the soulless tolerance of the coasts.

But at the same time, the books seem written for a political constituency that does not yet exist. They seek to reinvigorate the liberalism of the mid-twentieth century, yet they do not fully appreciate the exceptional circumstances that brought it about. Although their books are trenchant and incisive, their anger seems born more of desperation than of strength. After all, they are trying to defend the remnants of liberalism, an old political order, more than seeking to create a new one. Their books seem radical only because the institutions and the ideas that made the New Deal and the liberal politics of the mid-twentieth century possible have been so significantly weakened. There is, of course, a certain rhetorical power in claiming the mantle of history. But what's missing from their wish to revive the economic policies of the New Deal and the liberal consensus of the mid-twentieth century are the kind of calls for a true break from the past that sparked those policies to life.

Paul Krugman has a confession to make: he's nostalgic for the 1950s. Yes, the 1950s—the decade of Joseph McCarthy, the cold war and the segregated South—and despite the Vietnam War, he misses the '60s too. Back in the day, Krugman "railed against the very real injustices of our society" and even "marched against the bombing of Cambodia." But the liberal order that he criticized then now looks like a "paradise lost."

What does Krugman miss? Well, for one thing, in the '50s the nation's wealthiest people weren't casually purchasing multimillion-dollar apartments in New York City and planning to spend millions more on renovations before they even moved in. They weren't hosting birthday parties for their children at $120,000 a pop, hiring personal nutritionists to evaluate the menus of restaurants around town or filling their hours with many of the other gold-plated entertainments breathlessly catalogued in a recent issue of *The New York Times Magazine* about the new Gilded Age.

In the last Gilded Age, tycoons like Andrew Carnegie believed that the wealthy were the winners in a great cosmic race and that they, not the state, were best able to determine the right ways to spend their fortunes. The impotence of the business class during the economic free-fall of the 1930s destroyed this vision of the omnipotent rich. By the '50s, top income tax rates were 91 percent, while estate taxes were near 80 percent. Krugman estimates that the result of these tax rates was that the income of the richest 1 percent of the country was 20 to 30 percent lower in the mid-'50s than it had been a generation before. Yet the "compression" of incomes did not destroy incentives or halt economic growth, as conservatives often warn. On the contrary, family incomes rose regularly throughout the period, climbing about 2.7 percent each year from 1947 to 1973, compared with an annual 0.7 percent increase in median family income since 1980. There was, of course, still much poverty in 1950s America, especially among black Southerners living under Jim Crow. But the gap between the rich and the poor was not widening rapidly the way it is today.

In recent years, of course, the situation has reversed itself. The wealthiest 0.1 percent of Americans were five times richer in 2005 than they were in 1973. Median household income over the same thirty-five-year period had grown 16 percent—mostly as a result of more women entering the labor force; male wages fell over the same period. The result is that the wealthiest people in our society live in a world markedly different—in its daily texture and its horizons of possibility—from the world inhabited by everyone else. Most economists explain this rising income inequality in terms of market forces: the rise of international trade, globalization and an influx of immigrants have all hurt the bargaining power of working-class people while enhancing returns to the educated and skilled.

But Krugman, while assessing the relative impact of immigration and trade on the wages of working-class people, bucks the norms of his profession and argues instead that the primary reasons for the decline of the more egalitarian society of mid-twentieth-century America are political. There was nothing inevitable about the rise of that "middle-class" suburban, mass-consumption economy in the postwar period; it was made possible only by high income taxes and strong labor unions. Today, we are returning to the economic institutions of the last Gilded Age. The tax system is now less progressive than it has been in decades, and the proportion of the private-sector labor force represented by unions has declined to its lowest level since before the New Deal. It should be no surprise, therefore, that our society is becoming as divided by class as it was then.

Krugman argues that the conservative movement is in large part responsible for this rise in economic inequality. The legislation that had seemed so radical in the 1930s—like Social Security and the National Labor Relations Act—had by the '50s become "the very definition of political moderation," accepted by Republicans and Democrats alike. The sole Republican President between 1932 and 1968 was Dwight Eisenhower, who expanded Social Security and the minimum wage and wrote to his conservative brother Edgar that anyone who wanted to cut back labor laws and unemployment insurance was "stupid" and politically suicidal. But a small number of conservative activists, backed by antiunion businesses, sought to undermine this consensus by supporting candidates and legislation that would dismantle the welfare state, labor unions and the New Deal. And that group was able to prevail, Krugman argues, because the power of the right is historically different from that of the left. Where the civil rights movement and the labor movement depended on the active participation of millions of people, the strength and longevity of the conservative movement have come from the

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small number of wealthy activists like Joseph Coors and Richard Mellon Scaife who have contributed to its support over the years. Its electoral victories have not reflected popular support for the laissez-faire program as much as the cynical willingness of Republican campaign operatives to win votes by exploiting racism—such as when Ronald Reagan attacked "welfare queens" in 1976 and gave a 1980 campaign speech about states' rights near Philadelphia, Mississippi, where three young civil rights workers were murdered in 1964. "The legacy of slavery, America's original sin, is the reason we're the only advanced economy that doesn't guarantee health care to our citizens," Krugman writes.

The Conscience of a Liberal excels when Krugman is giving his trademark crisp, clear surveys of the economic literature. He isn't really writing history, and as a result, his sketch of the evolution of the conservative movement sometimes seems offhand and overly schematic. But his argument that inequality has political causes nonetheless resonates throughout the book. We can, he insists, make collective choices about how unequal we want our society to be. He calls for the revival of an "unabashedly liberal program of expanding the social safety net and reducing inequality—a new New Deal." Although he advocates universal healthcare (especially single-payer)—in part on the grounds that it would be far more effective than our current system of private insurance, in which Americans pay more than people in other developed countries for healthcare that is far worse—his underlying reasons for wanting to revive the New Deal go beyond the economist's questions about growth or efficiency. Universal healthcare, labor unions and policies that reduce inequality all cut against the idea that some people deserve one way of living—elite universities, million-dollar cars, Hamptons mansions, medical concierges when traveling the world—and others the opposite: crumbling schools, decrepit subways, crowded apartments, no healthcare at all. Rather than generating baroque myths about the superhuman greatness of CEOs alongside morality tales about the character failings of the poor, minimum wages and progressive taxes create a society capable of honoring the truth that people really are created equal.

Krugman writes in the tone of a mild-mannered, reasonable professor, rarely getting flustered as he goes about calmly disarming his intellectual opposition. Jonathan Chait, by contrast, opens his book with an apology for sounding a bit like an "unhinged conspiracy theorist." You can imagine him shaking his fist or slamming his computer keyboard as he denounces the "tiny coterie of right-wing economic extremists," some of whom are "ideological zealots, others merely greedy, a few of them possibly insane." But in truth, Chait explains, he isn't a radical at all. He's just a displaced moderate (he gets a little sentimental about the "modern Republicans" of the Eisenhower era) who has found the center pulled out from under him.

The Big Con is at its best whenever Chait skewers the conservative intellectuals who popularized supply-side economics, which he sees as the obsession of today's Republican Party. The basic idea of supply-side theory is that economic growth is determined almost entirely by the incentives entrepreneurs and investors have to create wealth, especially tax rates. But there is no academic consensus around the idea that there really is a close correlation between tax cuts and growth. The theory owes its popularity, Chait argues, to its promotion by a few economic cranks.

George Gilder, for example, in his 1981 classic, *Wealth and Poverty*, celebrated the generosity and altruism of entrepreneurs, whom he described as creative geniuses eager to share their gifts with humankind rather than as selfish capitalists driven by economic gain. He also believed in ESP, and took special pride in his ability to locate the queen of spades in a deck of cards without looking. Jude Wanniski, another leader of the movement, saw tax rates as the prime mover of history. In his magnum opus, *The Way the World Works*, he wrote that even sobbing infants were actually learning about supply and demand: "When the baby screams all the time demanding attention, even when fed and dry, he discovers that mother also remains in the other room and perhaps even closes the nursery door. The tax rate is 100 percent, also yielding zero attentiveness." Over the years, Wanniski swung further away from respectable politics, meeting with Louis Farrakhan of the Nation of Islam (he approved of Farrakhan's advocacy of black enterprise), comparing Slobodan Milosevic to Abraham Lincoln and defending Saddam Hussein in the run-up to the Iraq War. He hired the disciples of Lyndon LaRouche at his economic consulting firm, arguing—rightly—that they were not "trained in demand-model economics." Eventually even the movement institutions disowned him. But they continued to profess the supply-side faith, right up to the Bush tax cuts.

So how did the ideas of these characters come to be the governing wisdom of the Republican Party? Chait suggests that during the 1970s, their ideas resonated with the business lobby at a moment when corporations were organizing to defend themselves against the criticisms of the counterculture and the consumer movement, which accused business of creating faulty and dangerous products, profiting from the Vietnam War and polluting the country's air and water. Since that time, the political significance of the business community has only grown, and Chait argues that it is the real constituency for the Republican Party. Occasionally, lobbyists organize populist pageants to claim a broader base for the program. Chait tells of a memo that circulated before a 2001 rally in support of the Bush tax cuts: "If people want to participate—AND WE DO NEED BODIES—they must be DRESSED DOWN, appear to be REAL WORKER types, etc." Hard hats were passed out to the lobbyists who came. But such antics aside, it's clear who benefits.

To understand the ascendancy of the right, Chait suggests we go back to the 1950s, when intellectuals like Richard Hofstadter and Daniel Bell dismissed conservatives as "crackpots" and paranoiacs, displaced small businessmen suffering from "status anxiety" who lashed out against a new world of technological modernity and bureaucratic organization. Recent scholars working on the conservative movement have rejected the psychological turn of the "radical right" thesis of the 1950s, trying instead to get inside the minds of conservative activists and treat them with respect, if not always sympathy. But Chait argues that "the Hofstadters and Bells were on to something"—the right really is radical, Manichean, ideological and paranoid. The real problem of modern America is the loss of the reasonable, moderate center embodied by the 1950s intellectuals. In a sense, both Chait and Krugman identify with the liberals of that earlier era, scandalized by the perversions of the radical right, with the difference that today the radicals have escaped from the farm and are running the country. Restoring the New Deal is a project of political conservation, a defense of how things used to be before the country was derailed by a nutty conservative cabal.

The problem with this pastoral tale is that it makes the New Deal seem too easy and too natural, as though it was the norm and recent history the aberration. In fact, the reforms of the New Deal—the passage of legislation giving workers the right to organize unions, the creation of a public system of social insurance for the elderly, the introduction of regulation of the stock exchanges, the national minimum wage, the expansion of progressive taxation (although this truly broadened only during World War II)—were won at a moment when capitalism faced the most prolonged, pronounced crisis in its history. The business class of the United States was at its nadir in terms of public prestige during the 1930s,

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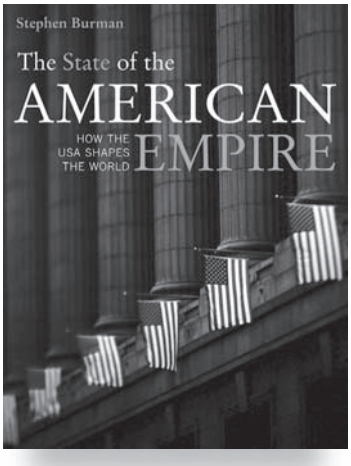

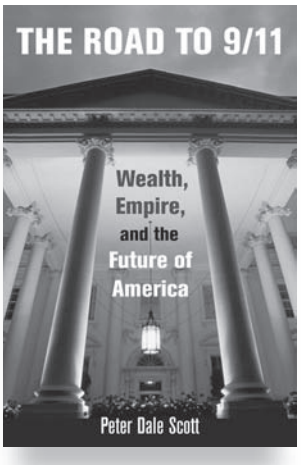

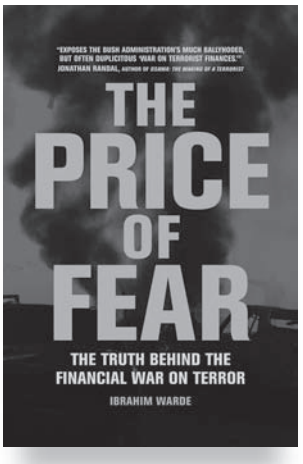

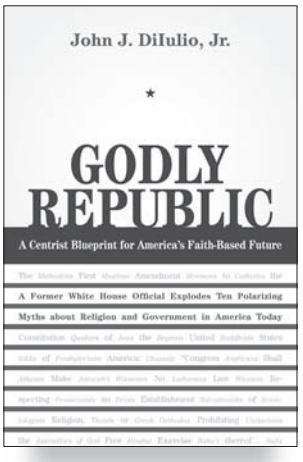
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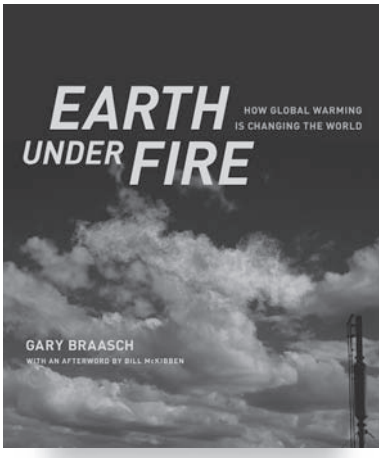

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challenged by a militant labor movement, the alternative model of the Soviet Union and the spread of radicalism of various stripes at home. The New Deal was partial and incomplete, a fragmentary welfare state, and yet it could be created only when it seemed capitalism was on the verge of collapse.

Moreover, even though it is true that the parties did not clash openly over the political economy during the 1950s, the economic order eulogized by Krugman never elicited a genuine or complete consensus. Southern and Southwestern states partly exempted themselves from the high-tax, high-wage economy of postwar liberalism, passing right-to-work laws to limit union strength and keeping state and local taxes low to lure capital from the North. Many companies in the North and Northeast tried to find ways to resist labor and the state even at the height of postwar liberal power, doing their best to weaken their unions and funding conservative think tanks. In short, the central institutions of the New Deal were under attack throughout the postwar period, and in fact had eroded substantially by the 1970s. The difficulty of creating the New Deal in the 1930s, and the conflict that it caused even in the '50s and '60s, suggests that it will not be easy to return to it today.

Chait's and Krugman's sense of themselves as the moderates fighting back a wave of radical libertarians also obscures just how far the center has shifted. After all, the right has no monopoly on love for the market model. The esoteric philosophies of Wanniski and Gilder gained credibility at a time when rational choice theory and Chicago School economics were winning converts in academia. The Democratic Party may not have pursued cutting income tax rates with the zeal of the Republicans, but under Clinton in the '90s the Democrats enthusiastically embraced the free market, passed welfare reform and debated the privatization of Social Security years before Bush brought it up. The business mobilization that Krugman and Chait decry has shaped the modern Democratic Party, too—and may do so especially in 2008, if the recent shift of corporate donations from the Republicans to the Democrats continues. (In late October the *New York Times* reported that healthcare companies have donated $6.5 million to the Democratic presidential candidates, compared with $4.8 million to the Republicans.) In 1946 Harry Truman proposed a national healthcare system resembling Canada's; the resistance of the American Medical Association and Southern Democrats doomed it to failure. But today, even Krugman—who believes that "in purely economic terms, single-payer is the way to go"—has joined the Democratic presidential candidates in advocating the more "politically feasible" solution of mandated coverage, or "a universal health care system run through private insurance companies."

Moreover, if conservatives aren't the only politicians to have embraced the free market, the victories of free-market economics can't be explained solely in terms of the opportunistic attempts of leaders to link conservative economic and social agendas. The beliefs of social scientists to the contrary, there is nothing simple or automatic about how people come to define their economic interests. Especially in the absence of organizations like labor unions, which can offer an alternative understanding of how the economy operates, it should not be surprising that the vision of the marketplace itself exercises a certain deep appeal, even for people who do not benefit from the policies it prescribes. After all, the market model suggests that individuals exercise tremendous power over their own destinies. It argues that people can determine their economic fates. It provides a way of connecting one's actions to the larger outcome of social and historical processes. These ideas have their own logic and their own attraction, quite aside from the politics of cultural backlash with which they are frequently joined.

Indeed, perhaps the most striking difference between the conservative activists and intellectuals who built the right and modern-day liberals like Krugman and Chait is how tentative the latter are when it comes to offering a new vision of how to go about "putting material things in their proper place" and fashioning a relationship between the individual and the state that can foster liberty and equality. When Goldwater (OK, Bozell) wrote *The Conscience of a Conservative*, he knew he was calling for a dramatic change in the country's direction. Ronald Reagan in 1980 also claimed to want to break with history. But these contemporary liberals insist that they are not calling for anything particularly far-reaching; their politics are to be found in the past, in the moderate consensus, in the New Deal. They want to move forward but only by moving back. The internal weaknesses and flaws of the New Deal, or of postwar liberalism, which might seem manifest in the ease with which it was ultimately dismantled, seem to trouble them not at all. Yet if the conservative movement has any political lesson to teach to those who disagree with its motives and goals, it should be that sometimes only a willingness to be radical really brings about change. ■

REUTERS

A young woman joins 3,000 Sikhs protesting the French ban on headscarves in schools, January 31, 2004.

Beyond the Veil

by LAILA LALAMI

"A kind of aggression." "A successor to the Berlin Wall." "A lever in the long power struggle between democratic values and fundamentalism." "An insult to education." "A terrorist operation." These descriptions—by former French President Jacques Chirac; economist Jacques Attali; and philosophers Bernard-Henri Lévy, Alain Finkielkraut and André Glucksmann—do not refer to the next great menace to human civilization but rather to the Muslim woman's headscarf, which covers the hair and neck, or, as it is known in

The Politics of the Veil
By Joan Wallach Scott.
Princeton. 208 pp. $24.95.

Laila Lalami, the author of Hope and Other Dangerous Pursuits, *is an assistant professor of creative writing at UC, Riverside.*

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France, the *foulard islamique*.

In her keenly observed book *The Politics of the Veil*, historian Joan Wallach Scott examines the particular French obsession with the foulard, which culminated in March 2004 with the adoption of a law that made it illegal for students to display any "conspicuous signs" of religious affiliation. The law further specified that the Muslim headscarf, the Jewish skullcap and large crosses were not to be worn but that "medallions, small crosses, stars of David, hands of Fatima, and small Korans" were permitted. Despite the multireligious contortions, it was very clear, of course, that the law was primarily aimed at Muslim schoolgirls.

The decade-long debate in France over the foulard was marked by three specific controversies. The first erupted in October 1989, when Ernest Chénière, the principal of a high school in Creil, north of Paris, expelled three students: Samira Saidani and Leila and Fatima Achaboun. The reason for the expulsion, Chénière claimed, was that he had to enforce *laïcité*, the French notion of secularism, in the school. The national debate that followed took place within the context of the fatwa against Salman Rushdie and the West's confrontation with Iran, on the one hand, and the celebration of the bicentennial of the French Republic, on the other.

The French obsession with the foulard dates back to France's invasion of Algeria in 1830.

At the time that France's attention was focused on three teenage girls with headscarves, the country had more than 3 million Muslims. French-Algerian novelist Leïla Sebbar, writing in *Le Monde*, qualified the controversy as "grotesque." In the end, the Socialist Lionel Jospin, who at that time was minister of education, chose to let the courts decide the case. The Conseil d'État eventually ruled that students could not be refused admission simply for wearing headscarves, but it also gave teachers and principals the power to decide, on a case-by-case basis, whether such signs of religious affiliation were permissible.

The second foulard controversy ignited in 1994 with the same Ernest Chénière. He was no longer a high school principal, having capitalized on his earlier fame and won a Parliament seat as a deputy for the center-right party Rassemblement pour la République, representing the department of Oise. In this new capacity, he sponsored a bill to ban all "ostentatious" signs of religious affiliations in schools. The same arguments were offered up as in 1989, but the political context this time was supplied by the civil war in Algeria. For Chénière and his large and diverse number of supporters, the fight against Islamic fundamentalism in Algeria and elsewhere mandated a strengthening of the secularist state at home.

The third and most recent foulard controversy occurred in 2003, when two teenage sisters, Alma and Lila Lévy, were expelled from their high school in the Paris suburb of Aubervilliers for refusing to take off their headscarves. The Lévy sisters are the daughters of a lawyer who considers himself "a Jew without God" and a Kabyle teacher who had been baptized a Catholic during the Algerian war. The girls had converted to Islam after their parents' separation and had donned the scarves as part of that process. In an interview with *Le Monde*, the girls' father declared, "I am not in favor of the headscarf, but I defend the right of my children to go to school. In the course of this business I've discovered the hysterical madness of certain ayatollahs of secularism who have lost all their common sense."

That year, a commission led by former government minister Bernard Stasi, which had been formed to study the feasibility of a law on religious displays, held interviews with various specialists. It later issued a report that reaffirmed the importance of secularism to the Republic and suggested a law on "conspicuous" religious signs but also made some recommendations to acknowledge the plurality of religions in France. (For example, the commission suggested the recognition of Yom Kippur and Eid-al-Adha as national holidays.) The sole recommendation that Jacques Chirac took from the Stasi commission was the law banning the headscarf. Wallach Scott writes:

> There was to be no room for the compromises that had been negotiated in years past (scarves on shoulders, "lite" scarves, bandanas); the law was designed to dispel the tensions these compromises had embodied. It became the law of the land in March 2004, and its enforcement began the following October. Without the softening effect of the other recommendations, the headscarf ban became a definitive pronouncement: there would no longer be compromises or mediation—it was either Islam or the republic.

In order to understand how a small piece of cloth became a national obsession (compared, by philosophers no less, to terrorism), one must go back quite a few years in French history, to the era that current French President Nicolas Sarkozy recently told his compatriots they must stop repenting for: colonization. Indeed, Wallach Scott argues, it is impossible to understand modern-day attitudes in France toward the foulard without delving into the history of racism in that country, because the headscarf has played a "significant part as a continuing sign of the irreducible difference between Islam and France" and is perceived to express "not only religious incompatibilities but also ethnic/cultural ones."

When the French government invaded Algeria, in 1830, it started a vast campaign of military "pacification," which was quickly followed by the imposition of French laws deemed necessary for the civilizing mission to succeed. Women were crucial to that enterprise. In articles, stories and novels of the day, Algerian women were universally depicted as oppressed, and so in order for civilization truly to penetrate Algeria, the argument went, the women had to cast off their veils. General Bugeaud, who was charged with administering the territory in the 1840s, declared, "The Arabs elude us because they conceal their women from our gaze." Algerian men, meanwhile, were perceived to be sexual predators who could not control their urges unless their womenfolk were draped in veils. Colonization would solve this by bringing the light of European civilization to Arab males, who, after a few generations of French rule, would learn to control their urges. The governor-general of Algeria remarked in 1898 that "the Arab man's, the native Jew's and the Arab woman's physiology, as well as tolerance for pederasty, and typically oriental ways of procreating and relating to one another are so different from the European man's that it is necessary to take appropriate measures." As late as 1958, French wives of military officers, desperate to stop support for the FLN, which spearheaded the war of liberation against France, staged a symbolic "unveiling" of Algerian women at a pro-France rally in the capital of Algiers.

Decades later, millions of French citizens with ancestral roots in North Africa are being told much the same thing: in order to be French, they must "integrate" by giving up that which makes them different—Islam. The religion, however, is not regarded as a set of beliefs that adherents can adjust to suit the demands of their

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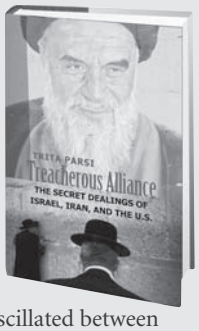

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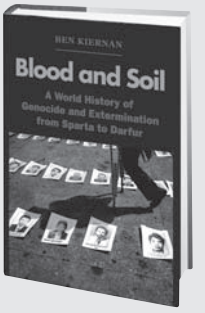

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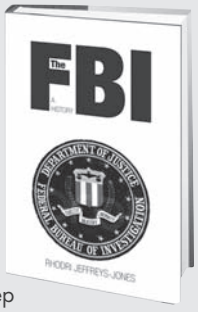

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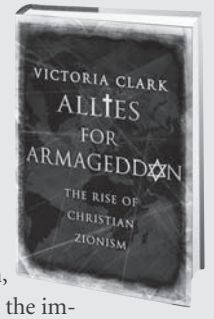

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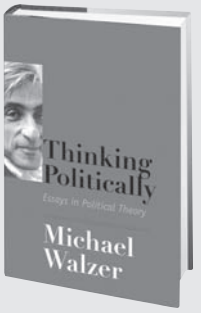

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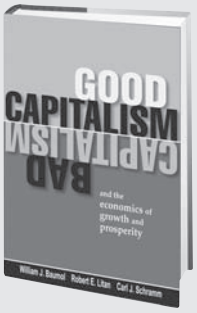
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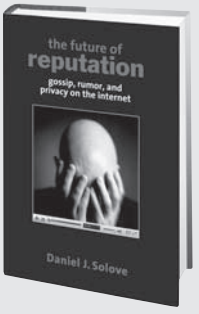

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everyday lives but rather as an innate and unbridgeable attribute. It is easy to see how racism can take hold in such a context. During the foulard controversies, it did not appear to matter that 95 percent of French Muslims do not attend mosque, that more than 80 percent of Muslim women in France do not wear the headscarf or even that the number of schoolgirls in headscarves has never been more than a few hundred. The racist notion of innate differences between French citizens of North African origin and those of European origin defined the debate. For instance, the Lévy sisters were sometimes referred to in the press as Alma and Lila Lévy-Omari, thus making their ancestral link to North Africa (on their mother's side) clearer to the reader.

Critics of the foulard treated it as a sign that Muslim girls were not capable of free thought.

If racism has been the subtext of the foulard controversy in France, Wallach Scott argues, then *laïcité* was its expression. Those who supported the ban on headscarves argued that *laïcité* was not simply secularism but a universal notion that was also unique to France. They called it *une singularité française*. Upon closer scrutiny, however, this particular notion seemed to be quite accommodating to Catholics and rather intransigent to others. For instance, the 1905 law that separated church and state allowed students to have Sundays off to attend church and gave them an additional weekday for religious instruction in the church. The French government currently contributes 10 percent of the budgets of private Christian schools. The school calendar observes Catholic holidays only. Still, despite the discrepancies with which *laïcité* is applied in schools, those who opposed the foulard fervently claimed their attachment to *laïcité* and its necessity for the survival of the Republic. *Laïcité* was what made France unique. Therefore, to support the freedom of girls to dress as they please could only mean being an apologist for the oppression of women and an enemy of *laïcité*, and to uphold *laïcité* meant being in favor of a ban on the foulard.

At the height of the controversy, everyone seemed to have an opinion about the law. More than sixty public personalities—including actresses Emmanuelle Béart and Isabelle Adjani, philosopher Élisabeth Badinter, former government ministers Corinne Lepage and Yvette Roudy, and activist Fadela Amara—appealed to Chirac in the pages of *Elle* magazine to pass a law banning the foulard. Few voices were heard in defense of both *laïcité* and Muslim girls' civil right to attend school. Among these were comic book artist Marjane Satrapi, who wrote in the *Guardian* that to forbid schoolgirls to wear the veil was as repressive as forcing them to wear it, and philosopher Pierre Tévanian, who argued that *laïcité* applied to institutions, not people.

In *The Politics of the Veil*, Wallach Scott does a good job of conveying the hysteria that surrounded the foulard debate in France, although the book could have used some copy-editing. For instance, Ernest Chénière, the high school principal who started the 1989 controversy, gets rebaptized, becoming Eugène Chenière. In addition, Wallach Scott neglects to mention an important postscript to the *affaires des foulards*: the kidnapping, in August 2004, of French journalists Georges Malbrunot and Christian Chesnot by an obscure Islamist group in Iraq, and the group's demand that the law be repealed. (French citizens, Muslim and otherwise, rejected the intrusion into their internal affairs.) But Wallach Scott's broad and exhaustive research makes for a bracing account of the debate.

Aside from prevalent racism and a rigid understanding of *laïcité*, a third reason for the focus on the foulard is a narrow conception of individualism. Wallach Scott demonstrates that French Muslim girls, who were primarily affected by the law on the foulard, were "strikingly absent from the debates." The Stasi commission interviewed just a few girls, and in private sessions only, so that their voices and opinions were never part of the larger public discussion. While acknowledging that some girls may have worn the foulard for reasons other than pressure by fathers or brothers, commentators viewed it simply as a symbol of "the alienation of women." However much the girls or opponents of the law insisted that the foulard was "an expression of individual conviction," the state and supporters of the law declared that "this could not logically be the case," because the headscarf could only mean "an abandonment of individuality and a declaration of one's primary allegiance to communal standards and obligations." In order to be truly French, therefore, Muslim girls had to renounce the foulard, since in this view it was a signal that they were neither loyal to France nor individuals capable of free thought.

The last, and perhaps most disturbing, reason for the focus on the foulard is its sexual connotation. Commentators often contrasted Islamic tradition, which advocates the headscarf as a means of curbing women's "dangerous sexuality," and French culture, which "celebrates sex and sexuality as free of social and political risk." In reality, both Islamic Sharia and strict French *laïcité* produced gender systems that essentially deprived women of the right to dispose of their bodies as they wished. Indeed, in Islamic tradition, women are urged to be modest and to steer clear of *tabarruj*. This Arabic noun has its roots in the verb *baraja*, which means "to display" or "to show off," and the noun can be translated as something like "affectation." In *A Season in Mecca*, his narrative book about the pilgrimage, Moroccan anthropologist Abdellah Hammoudi uses the term "ostentation" to translate *tabarruj*, "the invariable term for a bearing that is deemed immodest or conspicuous, a hieratic stance." Similarly, the French law born out of strict definitions of *laïcité* warned schoolgirls about displaying "conspicuous" signs of religious affiliation. In short, the battle between the two modes of thinking was played out in women's bodies.

The sexual argument against the foulard was common in France in 2003, although by that point the word "foulard" had all but disappeared from public discourse and was replaced by *voile*, or veil, which covers the entire face except for the eyes. This was erroneous but not entirely innocent, of course, because it made it possible for commentators to talk in terms of more general stereotypes of Muslim women in places like Yemen, where the veil is prevalent, rather than the reality of suburban Paris, where it is not. More recently, in an interview with a London-based newspaper, Bernard-Henri Lévy went as far as to say that "the veil is an invitation to rape." It is perverse to suggest that a woman is inviting rape by the way she dresses, but such is the extreme that Lévy will go to in order to preserve the idea of a homogeneous female European identity. In this view, a European woman is uncovered, and that signifies both her availability to the male gaze as well as her liberation.

It is interesting, too, that Lévy demands for himself that which he is not willing to give others. In 2004 he hired the designer Andrée Putman to renovate his vacation home in Tangier. The home lies next to the famous Café Hafa, whose regulars once included Paul Bowles, Tennessee Williams and Jean Genet, and which has unparalleled views of the Mediterranean. Patrons of the cafe can no longer enjoy an unobstructed view, however, because during the renova-

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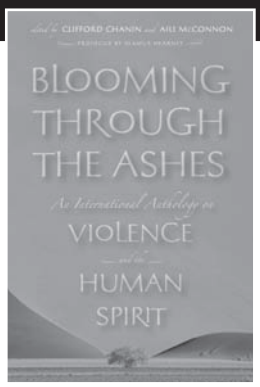

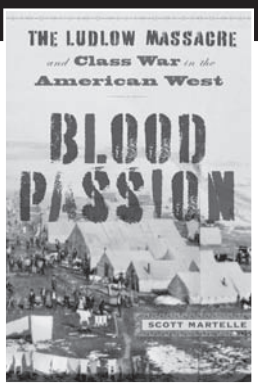

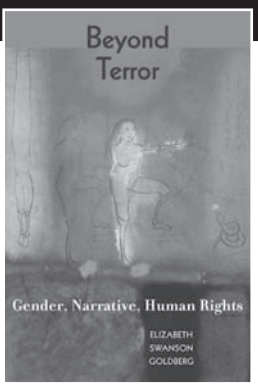

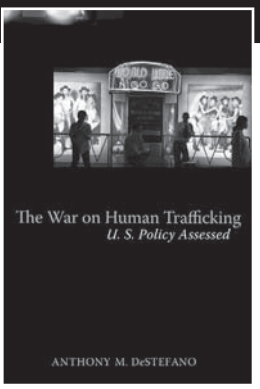

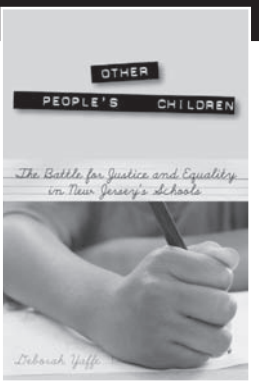

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tions Lévy constructed a wall around his terrace, where his wife, the actress and singer Arielle Dombasle, likes to sunbathe. Lévy reportedly wanted to protect her from the eyes of the men at the Café Hafa. Unveiling only goes one way, it seems.

There is in France today a pervading hypocrisy that invokes freedom of expression when cartoonists from *Charlie Hebdo* or *France Soir* offend Muslim sensibilities but remains stubbornly quiet when a Muslim woman's right to dispose of her body as she wishes is denied. This is the same hypocrisy that calls soccer star Zinedine Zidane a French citizen without any qualifications but refers to Zacarias Moussaoui as a French citizen of Moroccan origin. It is the same hypocrisy that organizes support committees for teachers in Flers who refuse to teach girls wearing the foulard but does not appear to care that 40 percent of French youths living in the largely impoverished and North African *banlieues* are unemployed. It is the same hypocrisy that celebrates the work of North African soldiers in the fight against the Nazis in World War II but until last year refused them the same army pensions as their French counterparts. It is the same hypocrisy that condemns humorist Dieudonné for his abhorrently racist remarks on Jews but condones former *Le Point* editor Claude Imbert when he says, "I am something of an Islamophobe and I'm not embarrassed to say so."

It is the same hypocrisy, finally, that expends boundless intellectual energy and enormous state resources on a small number of schoolgirls in headscarves but does next to nothing to ensure that these schoolgirls—most of whom are stuck in low-performing high schools designated as ZEPs (or *zones d'éducation prioritaires*)—gain access to the same educational and employment opportunities as their white compatriots. In the end, the successive controversies in France have served as fantastic distractions from real problems and have provided comfort and support to Islamic fundamentalists, who recruit Muslim youngsters by telling them that France does not want them. The foulard in France, therefore, is nothing more than a fig leaf; however long one stares at it, the eye will eventually have to face the nakedness of racism and discrimination.

To paraphrase another French philosopher: I do not approve of the headscarf, but I will defend to the death the right of women to wear it. ■

Terra Incognita

by RUTH SCURR

"As the eighteenth-century mapmakers knew from painful experience, discovering is not the same as knowing." This difference—too often elided by explorers and scholars alike—is scrupulously observed by Graham Robb in his most ambitious book to date, *The Discovery of France*. The book is Robb's ninth. Its predecessors include celebrated biographies of Honoré de Balzac (1994), Victor Hugo (1997) and Arthur Rimbaud (2000). Ambition, in this context, is truly formidable. And yet Robb's opening is the most modest I remember reading in years: "Ten years ago, I began to explore the country on which I was supposed to be an authority." Whereas he has previously mapped lives—sensitively but unsentimentally delineating the intellectual and historical contours against which some of France's greatest literature has taken shape—

The Discovery of France
A Historical Geography From the Revolution to the First World War.
by Graham Robb.
Norton. 455 pp. $27.95.

Robb now has the nation itself in his sights. Not the nation as it is familiarly known, domestically or abroad: Paris-centered, patriotic, sophisticated and grand. Nor the nation of stately historical narrative that builds from one intense period of transformation to the next: the reign of the Sun King, the coming of the French Revolution, Napoleon's rise to power. Instead, the nation that preoccupies Robb is decentered, disaggregated and wildly divergent; off the map metaphorically, historically and literally; France as no one has seen it before.

"This book is the result of fourteen thousand miles in the saddle and four years in the library," Robb explains, and no reviewer could match his elegant summary. It is important to pause and notice the simply stated effort that has gone into realizing the book's enormous ambition. "A bicycle unrolls a 360-degree panorama of the land, allows the rider to register its gradual changes in gear ratios and muscle tension, and makes it hard to miss a single inch of it, from the tyre-lacerating suburbs of Paris to the Mistral-blasted plains of Provence." Robb has savored the lay of the land at peddling pace, mindful of Victor Hugo's regret that he missed so much traveling in a nineteenth-century diligence. "A hundred and fifty leagues in thirty-six hours and what have I seen?" Hugo grumbled in 1843. "I've seen Étampes, Orléans, Blois, Tours, Poitiers and Angoulême.... That's what France is when you see it from the mail coach. What will it be like when it's seen from the railway?" Or when it is a blur beyond the TGV window? Or reduced to the soft-focus graphics of Google Earth? Real knowledge is hard won (a point Robb makes by example rather than insistence) and predicated on the discovery born of effortful exploration. Sedentary painstaking archive research might be less appealing than reconnaissance conducted from a bicycle saddle, but the two are complementary in *The Discovery of France*.

When he was cycling, Robb approached each journey as "a complex puzzle in four dimensions. I wanted to know what I was missing and what I would have seen a century or two before." His book is structured to reflect this pattern of inquiry: the reader is carried forward by the beautiful writing amid a swirl of intricate detail. The narrative is unpredictable: swerving, detouring, taking liberties with chronology. If you stop to plot the route, or start analyzing the compelling prose, you feel dizzy and about to fall off. Because this is such a distinctively personal as well as a deliberately innovative book, it seems sensible to explore Robb's suggestions for reading it. He offers three: "It can be read as a social and geographical history, as a collection of tales and *tableaux*, or as a complement to a guidebook."

France has not lacked historians. As an intellectual pursuing his research in the form of elaborate travel writing, Robb might be compared to Alexis de Tocqueville. Since 1789 the distinctions between different types of French history (political, social, cultural, economic and geographical, to name a few) have been strongly marked by the need to understand the Revolution: its origins, development and consequences. Tocqueville, born in Paris in 1805, belonged to the first generation to have no memory of the furies that ripped through the land of his ancestors in pursuit of *liberté, egalité, fraternité*. His history of the Old Regime, *L'Ancien Régime et la Révolution* (1856), traces the development of political

Ruth Scurr teaches history and politics at the University of Cambridge and is the author of Fatal Purity: Robespierre and the French Revolution.

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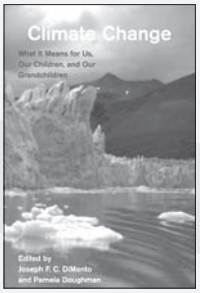

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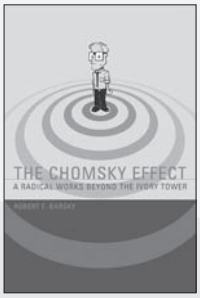

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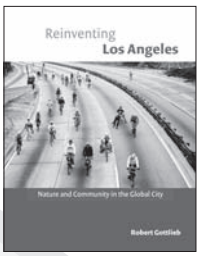

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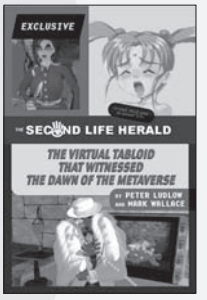
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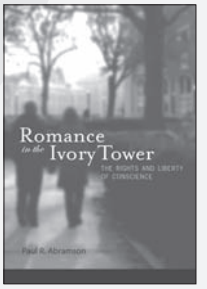

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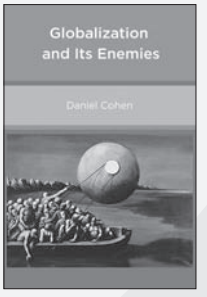

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and administrative centralization, which was destined to be both furthered and disrupted by the Revolution. Looking into the future of France (and America), Tocqueville foresaw centralized power—dangerous but inevitable—at the heart of modern democratic regimes. He noted:

> Centralization, a democratic instinct; instinct of a society which has succeeded in extricating itself from the individualistic system of the Middle Ages. Preparation for despotism. Why is centralization dear to the habits of democracy? Great question to delve into in the third volume of my work.... A major question.

Robb is obviously not in conflict or competition with Tocqueville (who is not directly mentioned in *The Discovery of France*). Instead he offers a vivid sense of what centralization in France was up against before, during and after the Revolution. Robb is interested in tracking the lives of common people who were, in Tocqueville's portrait of the premodern political world, "consigned to a kind of darkness, outside the pale of political life." Yet despite their different focuses and overarching purposes—Tocqueville's essentially political, Robb's overtly social and geographical—there are many points of convergence. Tocqueville's pronouncement that the old parishes of France enjoyed "the most extreme democracy" and reminded him of the rural communities in America, is echoed by Robb, who describes the neat and tidy village of Salency in 1789:

> The children were never sent away to become servants and they were not allowed to marry outside the parish. There were six hundred people with only three surnames between them. All were considered equal, and everyone worked the land, using spades instead of ploughs. As a result, their harvests were abundant, their children—even the girls—were taught to read and write by a salaried schoolmaster and his wife, and everyone was healthy, peaceful and attractive.

This, Robb explains, is drawn from a typical contemporary account of a self-governing village. When the Revolution came, tiny places like Salency were happy to declare themselves independent, but "their aim was not to develop the local economy and become part of a larger society." Robb redefines the word *pays*—pronounced *pay-ee* and often mistranslated as "country"—as "the area in which everything was familiar: the sound of the human voice, the orchestra of birds and insects, the choreography of winds and the mysterious configurations of trees, rocks and magic wells." He emphasizes the extent to which France was, and in part remains, a nation of a thousand *pays*, where it is still possible to get lost. From personal experience, cycling around the approximate limits of one *pays* after another, Robb derives a new method for determining the indeterminate borders: "The area in which a church bell can be heard more distinctly than those of other villages in the region is likely to be an area whose inhabitants had the same customs and language, the same memories and fears and the same local saint." A map of France composed of circles of sound centered on aggregates of church bells is an imaginatively charming solution to the problem of knowing where one *pays* ends and another begins.

Arras was known in the eighteenth century as "the city of a hundred steeples" because visitors approaching across the surrounding fields, or on the fine gravel road from the nearby town of Béthune, saw and heard from afar the tall spires of Arras's Gothic bell tower, the cathedral, the abbey, eleven parish churches, more than twenty monasteries and convents, numerous hospices, chapels and charitable institutions. The city was relatively privileged and wealthy, some of its buildings dating back to the time before Flanders was annexed by France. Even after 1738—when finance minister Philibert Orry and future director of *ponts et chaussées* (bridges and highways) Daniel Trudaine launched a serious attempt to create an integrated network of roads—many parts of France remained unconnected and inaccessible. Arras, meanwhile, was within reach of good roads and less than twenty-four hours from Paris by courier. Maximilien Robespierre was born there in 1758. In the Revolution, Robespierre would make his career championing the rights of the poor and, earlier than almost any of his contemporaries, evoking the principles of modern democracy. But little sense of the day-to-day lives of the laboring poor can be found in his long speeches. What were the impoverished lives like that inspired Robespierre to campaign so hard, first as a lawyer, later as a revolutionary?

Robb explains that the fields of Flanders were deserted for much of the year. Where did all the agricultural laborers disappear to? In Arras and the surrounding towns of Flanders, up to a third of the population lived in underground cities carved into medieval quarries (later used as shelters in World War I). Very little is written or known about these subterranean dwellers, but Robb quotes from an 1807 report:

> The vital air is constantly contaminated by the breath of eight to ten individuals who are piled up there in a tiny dwelling for twelve to fifteen hours a day with only one air-hole between them.

Robb argues that the author of the report—whose own working life was not dominated by the seasons—misunderstood the attractions of living underground: staying warm in winter and cool in summer. When the workers of nearby Lille were moved from their "unhygienic" cellars by nineteenth-century philanthropic reformers, they might have found the long trek up six flights of stairs to their attics "as depressing as the descent to a dungeon." The clearest evidence of human hibernation comes from an official report on the Nièvre, a *département* in the wine-making region of central France, in 1844. After the harvest was in and the vine stocks burned, and after "making the necessary repairs to their tools, these vigorous men will now spend their days in bed, packing their bodies tightly together in order to stay warm and to eat less food. They weaken themselves deliberately."

In a life that encompassed a traditional season of sloth there were obvious advantages to dwelling underground. To the economically minded, the waste of human productivity was appalling. But, once again, Robb is at pains to point out that improvements in living conditions were not at the forefront of most minds. As a Pyrenean peasant explained in the 1880s: "They had hardly any spirit of enterprise and were loath to make life more complicated when it was already hard enough to bear." In such circumstances Robb is right to remind us that "the very idea that it might be possible to alter the conditions of life was a revolution in itself." The announcement in 1789 of the forthcoming Estates General (France's largest representative body, which had not met since 1614) and the invitation to towns and parishes to list their grievances meant that "for the first time, suffering seemed to have an audience and literacy had a point." Robespierre was one of the many lawyers up and down the country who helped the illiterate draft their complaints.

As a work of social and geographical history, *The Discovery of France* acknowledges the precedent and influence of Eugen Weber's seminal study, *Peasants Into Frenchmen: The Modernization of Rural France, 1870–1914* (1976). There are, however, two major differences: Robb encompasses a broader time frame, reaching back before the Revolution,

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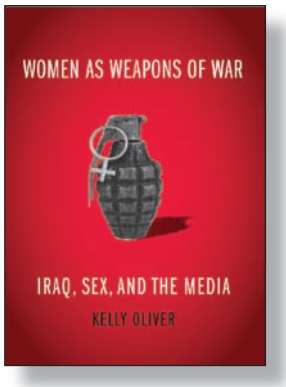

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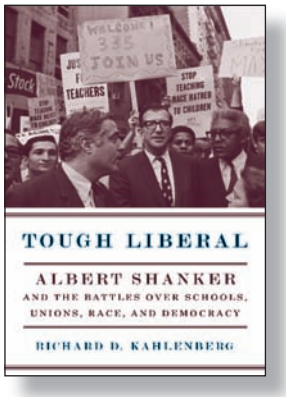

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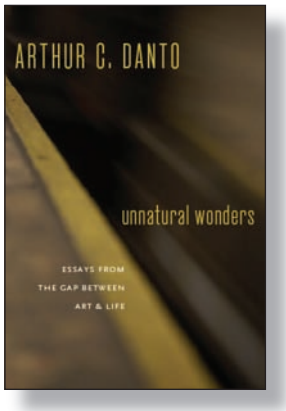

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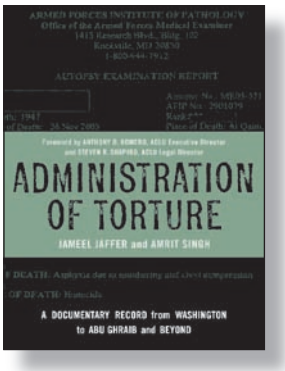
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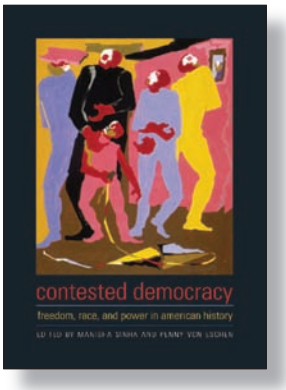

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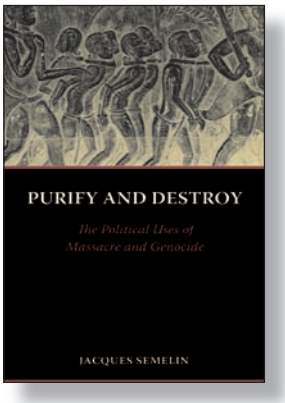

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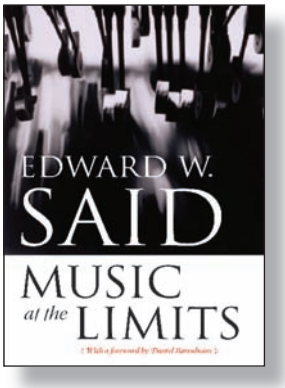

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even as far as Julius Caesar managing to cross most of Gaul without being noticed; Robb's is also the more open-ended of the two accounts, eschewing Weber's Part 3: "Change and Assimilation." Robb's book has just two parts, the first covering what there was (and remains) to be discovered, the second focusing on methods or means of exploration: maps, roads, canals, travel, etc. His conclusion, in stark contrast to Weber's view that by the end of the nineteenth century "popular and elite culture had come together again," is that "in the 21st century, many parts of France remain to be discovered," and that is before we get onto the more complex task of knowing them. At the time Robb was writing, cars were burning in the bleak Parisian suburbs of Clichy-sous-Bois, Aubervilliers and Seine-Saint-Denis, and a law passed during the colonial war in Algeria in 1955 had been evoked to impose a state of emergency: in France, terra incognita still lies for some at the end of a Paris Métro line.

I suspect that it is as "a collection of tales and *tableaux*" that *The Discovery of France* will secure its widest audience. Overwhelmed by the richness and quantity of anecdotal detail Robb sets before the reader, a number of reviewers on both sides of the Atlantic have resorted to characterizing his book as "a cabinet of curiosities." This is fair enough: Robb does present a parade of striking, sometimes freakish, people and artifacts to illustrate the sociological diversity he has discovered in contemporary and historic France. There are, for example, the disturbingly persecuted people known as *cagots*:

> At communion, they received the host on the end of a stick. They were forbidden to walk barefoot in public and to touch the parapet of a bridge with their bare hands. Until the seventeenth century, they paid no taxes because their money was considered unclean and they were excused military service because they were not allowed to carry arms.

Robb notes that the real "mystery of the cagot" is that they had no distinguishing features at all. Today the only traces of them survive in place names, stone carvings "and in tiny doors and fonts in about sixty churches from Biarritz to the western side of the Col de Peyresourde." The earliest record of them dates from the year 1000, and for 900 years they were found in small communities throughout the west of France. Perhaps they were descended from the Visigoths defeated by King Clovis in the sixth century, but after eight centuries of persecution, the only real difference between them and other denizens of France was that "they tended to be more skilful and resourceful than the surrounding populations, and more likely to emigrate to America."

More individuated examples include Saint Bernadette of Lourdes. Robb's account of her vision is sympathetic but wry:

> As she was removing her stockings to cross the canal, Bernadette heard a sudden gust of wind coming from the cave. Looking up, a few feet above the entrance, she saw a tiny figure dressed in white. It was no taller than herself (four foot seven inches). It wore a blue sash and a yellow rose on each foot. She later described it as "*u pétito damisèla*" (in French, *une petite demoiselle*). The figure reminded her of a twelve-year-old girl she knew who often wore a white dress. As usual when a Virgin appeared, there was great excitement in the region.

Robb continues to remind us that this was 1858, and the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception had been proclaimed four years earlier by Pope Pius IX and promulgated in Lourdes in 1855. Was it all baloney? Probably. But no need, he implies, to disrespect the people who believed (or believe) in Bernadette's vision.

Then there was Cassini III (from the line of distinguished cartographers numbered for convenience like kings), whose career began on a field in Flanders in 1746, where the French and Austrian armies were "laying waste the land" while he, in the family tradition, was recording it on "beautiful maps of camps and battlefields."

> The man who was born at the intersection of the meridian and the west-east line knew the country better than anyone else. No one had undertaken such long journeys across the land, following the invisible line of geometrical truth rather than the rivers and roads; no one had surveyed the land from so many vantage points. From scaffolding erected in forests and plains, Cassini had seen views that no one else had seen. He had heard dialects unknown to lexicographers, and he had an unrivalled knowledge of cheese from the Auvergne (unwholesome) to the Jura (delicious).

César-François Cassini, patently, is one of Robb's heroes.

The Discovery of France is intended as "a book in which the inhabitants [are] not airlifted from the land for statistical processing, in which 'France' and 'the French'… mean something more than Paris and a few powerful individuals, and in which the past [is] not a refuge from the present but a means of understanding and enjoying it." The book consolidates Robb's earlier work on literary grandees by providing a framework within which the lives of Hugo, Balzac, Rimbaud and others can be grounded and loosely connected to one another and, more important, to everyday life. Of the daily passenger boat from Nogent-sur-Seine that reached Paris in a day and a night, we learn: "This was the service on which the fifteen-year-old Napoleon first arrived in Paris and on which Frédéric Moreau leaves the city at the start of Flaubert's *L'Education sentimentale*." The boats and canals, once seen as harbingers of civilization, became associated with sluggishness and constraint by the end of the nineteenth century; hence the drunken boat of Rimbaud's 1871 poem "Le Bateau ivre," whose adventures begin only when it reaches the sea. Throughout, Robb argues that grandees and "a few powerful individuals" do not exhaust historical interest.

> Few men and even fewer women had the means or the desire to write a book on "How I failed to overcome my humble origins." Apart from the countless rags-to-riches tales written by aristocrats, almost all the lives that we know about follow the same untypical upward trend: the farmer's son Restif de la Bretonne, the cutler's son Diderot, the watchmaker's son Rousseau, the Corsican cadet Napoleon Buonaparte.

Literary biography is a special opportunity to broaden the historical cast list. Balzac became famous, but he wrote about the boredom at the heart of countless obscure lives. Flaubert's most recognized novel, *Madame Bovary*, is set in a small market town that lies along its little river "like a cowherd taking a siesta." Racine wrote grand classical French but visiting his uncle in Uzès "found himself four branches away from French. He was in the realm of Occitan, in the area dominated by Provençal—specifically, Rhodanian (Rhône) Provençal, comprising five main dialects, one of which was the dialect spoken in Uzès." *The Discovery of France* shows us the nation's great writers traveling literally and imaginatively through terra incognita. The achievement of this new book is prefigured in Robb's earlier books (in the portrait of Charleville in his biography of Rimbaud, for example). It is often lighthearted and companionable, as when quoting at enjoyable length from the traveler's phrase book

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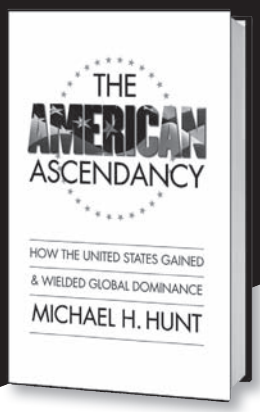

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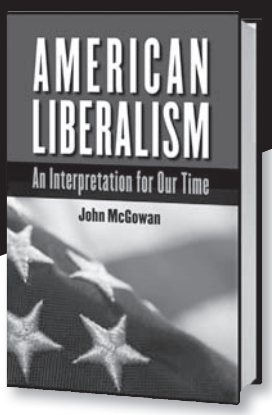

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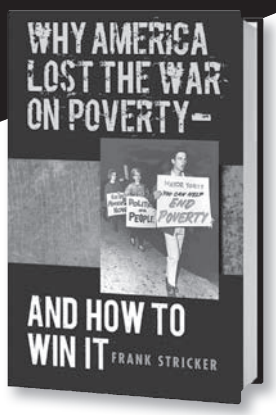

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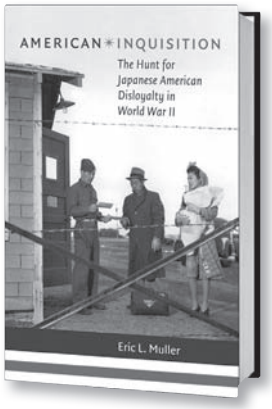

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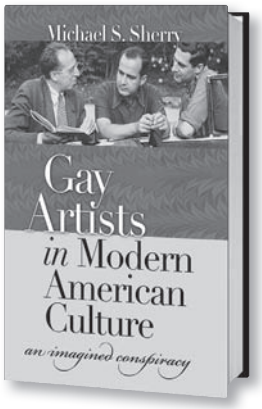

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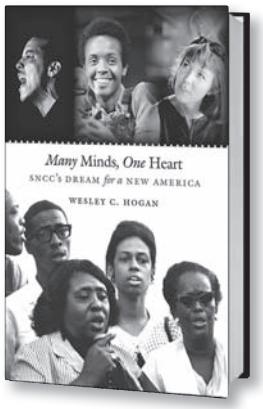

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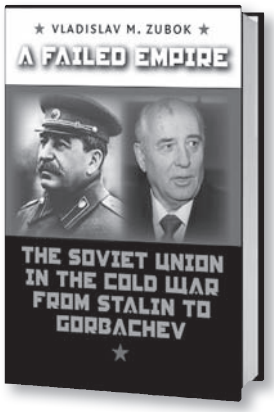

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written by Mme. de Genlis, a Revolutionary-era educator and satirist:

> Postilion, I do not wish to leave the main road. I am absolutely set against it.…
>
> Postilion, stop; the brakes must be attached.…
>
> Please ensure that the trunk is properly attached and that nothing has come undone.
>
> I believe the wheels are on fire. Look and see.

But underscoring all the fun Robb has had cycling 14,000 miles in France is his serious intellectual and historical purpose. When discussing the empty landscapes of the Landes (now known only through the late-nineteenth-century photographs of Félix Arnaudin), he remarks, "Nostalgia always has its own tale to tell."

Like all real romantics, Robb is strict with himself, and his nostalgia for vanished or vanishing parts of France is tempered always by his steely realism. This is, above all, a careful and tolerant book: impossible to think of better qualities in a traveling companion. ■

Underworlds

by HENRY FARRELL

Gomorrah
A Personal Journey Into the Violent International Empire of Naples' Organized Crime System.
By Roberto Saviano.
Translated by Virginia Jewiss.
Farrar, Straus & Giroux. 301 pp. $25.

Roberto Saviano is a marked man. After writing *Gomorrah* and publicly denouncing the bosses of the Camorra, the organized crime network that dominates the Italian city of Naples and the surrounding region of Campania, Saviano began receiving death threats. When he turned up recently at the trial of a Camorra member, the accused shouted at Saviano to pass on his best wishes to Don Peppino, a priest who had been murdered. Saviano now lives in an undisclosed location, under constant police guard, after Umberto Eco warned on public television that he would be murdered like the anti-Mafia magistrates Giovanni Falcone and Paolo Borsellino if the state didn't step in.

Saviano's transgression in writing this savage and extraordinary book wasn't simply to identify the Camorra's bosses and their enablers. It was to break an unstated compact, a web of complicity that entangles politicians, businessmen, Mafiosi, judges and journalists and enriches many who participate. This unstated agreement has survived the corruption scandals of the 1990s, which centered on bribes paid to Italian politicians and destroyed the major political parties of Italy. It insinuates itself throughout Italian politics and business, not so much an active conspiracy as a tacit consensus that you shouldn't rock the boat by pointing at others' indiscretions and shady relationships. After all, someone else might in turn point their finger at you. And if you're honest: well, nobody's entirely honest, and even those who are can be smeared.

Subsisting in a dank climate of collusion and corruption, public conversation in Italy is a tangle of circumlocutions. Nothing is ever stated directly. Italian newspapers regularly print politicians' speeches verbatim, but it's often impossible to tell what they mean to say. The speeches are composed of innuendos, obscure denunciations, defenses against charges never precisely spelled out. They seem less intended for the public eye than for an unseen audience, an imagined shadowy elite composed of the small number of people who actually know what is going on.

Investigative journalists—even the best ones—exhibit similar pathologies. They use nicknames coined by insiders to refer to prominent politicians and ministries, and they frequently hint that they know much more than they can tell. Scandals are never fully described or resolved; instead, they always point to even wider scandals that will forever remain undisclosed. The result is a pervasive cynicism among newspaper readers. The Italian language even has a word, *dietrologia*, to denote the belief that everything important happens behind the scenes, away from the public eye.

Saviano, who has written frequently for *La Repubblica*, a highly influential left-of-center newspaper, and its newsmagazine, *L'espresso*, clearly detests the system that has given rise to *dietrologia*. He opens *Gomorrah* with a shockingly direct image of a foul secret erupting in public view—a container full of corpses that broke open as it was being loaded onto a ship docked in Naples. "The hatches," Saviano explains, "which had been improperly closed, suddenly sprang open, and dozens of bodies started raining down. They looked like mannequins. But when they hit the ground, their heads split open, as if their skulls were real. And they were. Men, women, even a few children, came tumbling out of the container. All dead. Frozen, stacked one on top of another, packed like sardines." The bodies were those of Chinese immigrants who had worked in Italy's hidden economy and were being shipped back to their home country for burial.

The book continues with equally evocative descriptions of, among other subjects, the ways that goods are smuggled past customs; the working life of the subcontractors and piecework merchants of the Campanian garment industry; gang wars among the Secondigliano clans; the role of women in crime; the author's memories of his father; a minor mobster's pilgrimage to Russia to meet Mikhail Kalashnikov, the designer of the AK-47, who now sells his own brand of vodka; the iconography of murder; and the political economy of garbage disposal in Southern Italy. How do these connect?

At first, it isn't entirely clear. Although the descriptions are intelligent and beautifully written (Virginia Jewiss, who translated the book, makes a couple of small errors here and there but wisely preserves much of the piquant flavor of Saviano's Italian prose), they initially give the reader the impression that the book is going to be like one of Ryszard Kapuscinski's fiction-inflected works of journalism. Saviano's language has some of the exoticism that gives Kapuscinski his sense of enchantment and the grotesque. *Gomorrah*'s rhythms aren't properly those of the English language. The book deploys words in ways that sometimes reflect their Italian cognates more than their ordinary given meanings.

Yet as the book progresses, it becomes quite clear that Saviano's approach is very different from Kapuscinski's. It lacks the sense of alienation that tinges even Kapuscinski's most autobiographical work. Instead, Saviano's book becomes increasingly angry and direct. He sets out, deliberately and with full knowledge of the likely consequences, to speak directly and without obfuscation about what's going on in Campania. For him, words are the most important weapons "in a struggle against the mechanisms of power." His book is valuable not only because it names Camorra bosses but

Henry Farrell, an assistant professor of political science and international affairs at George Washington University, is a co-founder of the academic group blog Crooked Timber. He is finishing a book about the political economy of Italy.

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also because it identifies the relationships through which the Camorra sustains itself. Saviano hasn't written a sociological treatise about the Camorra. He doesn't state a thesis and draw carefully specified conclusions. Nor does he play coy. He's not only trying to understand the system of power that has ruined Campania but also doing his bit to attack and destroy it. His book pits his own form of writing—call it *Savianologia*—against the Camorra and the pervasive public attitude that nothing can be done about it.

There is much to destroy, which is why Saviano attacks the Camorra from different angles. He is at special pains to demonstrate how the Camorra straddles the clandestine and legal economies of Campania and, increasingly, those same economies in other parts of Italy and Europe. (Indeed, according to a study issued in October by Confesercenti, an association of small businesses, organized crime has become the largest segment of the Italian economy, accounting for 7 percent of Italy's GDP.) The book's opening scene establishes its focus: Saviano wants to know what the apparently bland and faceless economies of transport, construction and couture in Italy look like when they are broken open. He's asking where the bodies are hidden.

The Camorra likes Catholic ritual: it blesses packets of cocaine with holy water from Lourdes.

Camorra bosses prosper in the marketplace not only because they smuggle drugs and extort money but also because they dominate apparently legitimate sectors of the economy. There is no clear separation between the worlds of legal and illegal business in southern Italy—one feeds off the other. The most wretched quarters of Naples are simultaneously its "hidden mine, the darkness where the beating heart of the market gets its energy."

Saviano indeed suggests that the Camorra's underlying logic is a kind of capitalism on overdrive. By his account, the clans of the Camorra take the lessons of modern business, the "post-Fordist" economy that provides flexibility without rules, and exploit them to their logical conclusion. The clans compete in a marketplace based on the threat of violence but also provide certain services more cheaply and effectively than law-abiding firms ever could. They allow ordinary citizens to invest in the narcotics market: an investigation conducted by the Naples anti-Mafia bureau describes how retirees and small businessmen would hand money to Camorra agents, who would then bundle it and invest it in job lots of cocaine, providing the investors with far higher returns—doubling their money in a month—than they would have received for legitimate investments. Contract killing is seen as a kind of piecework: the slang term for killing someone is "to do a piece."

In some ways, the Secondigliano clans resemble speculative capitalists—they are ruthless market operators who identify and seek to capitalize on gaps and potential efficiencies that other organizations have overlooked. Saviano describes how they pioneered new forms of drug market organization in southern Italy. Rather than selling heroin only to dealers with clan connections, they opened up the market, breaking up heroin into smaller lots and selling it to anyone who would buy. They reorganized themselves so that lieutenants had much greater autonomy to make decisions. They provided safe market access by ensuring that the lookouts protected customers as well as dealers. They lowered prices when they needed to test the quality of a potentially dangerous cut of heroin, attracting "visitors," desperate junkies who were given hits for free to see whether they died or not. In short, the Secondigliano clans flattened the corporate hierarchy, brought through market liberalization and identified new efficiencies in bringing their product to market.

Some of these innovations had unexpected consequences. As lieutenants won greater freedom they lowered their contribution to the clan bosses and eventually tried to establish complete independence through the traditional means of betrayal and assassination. This led to a vicious internal war between the family of a reigning boss—the Di Lauros—and the "Spaniards"—the rebellious lieutenants and their allies. Despite the murder of their top management, the Di Lauros survived and staged a counterattack in which they killed many of their most important opponents. The war petered out after the parties agreed to carve up the narcotics market (giving the province to the secessionists and Naples to the Di Lauros). This pact wasn't kept secret—it was announced publicly and published in the pages of a prominent local newspaper for everyone to read, as if it were a coalition agreement between political parties.

In describing the clan wars and how they were rooted in changes in market organization, Saviano sometimes seems to claim that the Camorra is driven by a simple desire for power and money. Yet Saviano also cuts against this interpretation, describing the ways the Camorra is hostage to its own myths. The kids in the lowest ranks of the Camorra, Saviano explains, don't "dream of being Al Capone but Flavio Briatore [a flamboyant and shady Italian businessman], not gunslingers but entrepreneurs with beautiful models on their arms; they wanted to become successful businessmen." Their bosses, in contrast, fashion a style based on American movies and borrow language from *The Godfather*. When Cosimo Di Lauro is caught by the police, he doesn't try to escape; instead he ties his hair into a ponytail (like Brandon Lee in *The Crow*) so as to present a *bella figura* for the journalists' cameras. The figures of the mobster and the businessman blend into each other; both are attractive not simply because they have money but because they have glamour, power and, most important, respect.

Image and iconography are everything. The Camorra, like the Sicilian Mafia, often relies on the showier aspects of Catholic ceremony and devotionalism: packets of cocaine are blessed with holy water from Lourdes. Saviano writes about how the notorious boss Sandokan strangled another boss's heir to mark his own accession to the throne, strangulation being the traditional means through which one Neapolitan dynasty succeeds another. When the man who betrayed one of the Di Lauros was caught by his former comrades, he was tortured slowly with a spiked bat for hours, before having his ears cut off, his tongue cropped and his eyes gouged out with a screwdriver. He was finally done when his face was beaten in with a hammer and a cross carved on his lips. All this carried meaning—he had lost the ears with which he heard where the boss was hiding, the eyes he saw with, the tongue he talked with. The cross on his lips signified the faith he had betrayed.

These stories, focused as they are on myths and the desire for victory and respect, are hard to reconcile with Saviano's image of the Camorra as a harbinger of an especially brutal and rationalized form of neoliberalism. Even so, it's crucial that Saviano conveys the economic and the symbolic aspects of the Camorra. Both point beyond the bloody but often banal interclan struggles to the underlying system that creates these struggles. As Saviano says, each time one group of bosses is hauled off to prison, it's replaced by a newer, hungrier crew. Like a lizard that has lost its tail, the Camorra regenerates itself,

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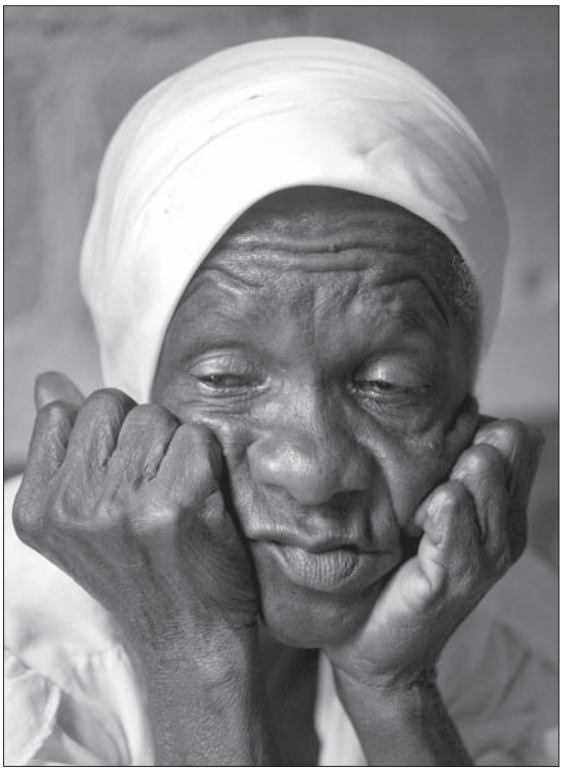

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and the Italian justice system seems hopelessly inadequate to destroying it, opting instead to ignore the problem and then taking palliative action.

Saviano grew up in a neighborhood dominated by the Camorra, and he writes about the complicated relationship that his father, a doctor, had with the local bosses. His father was once beaten up so badly for treating a victim of Camorra violence that he wasn't able to show himself in public for months. Yet Saviano's father still expresses a baffled envy and admiration for the bosses, those "who are really in command."

His father's shame speaks to Campanians' inability to think about what their part of the world might look like without the Camorra. It also evokes a more general cultural problem. In a study of the general sense of hopelessness prevalent in Mafia-dominated regions of southern Italy, the sociologist Rocco Sciarrone quotes a businessman saying that people don't denounce the Mafia because they know it won't do any good and they'll only get hurt. The belief that nothing can be done, and that attempts to reform the system are doomed to fail, is pervasive not only in Campania but in Calabria and Sicily too.

By naming the Camorra bosses and describing their extensive links to "legitimate" business, not only in Naples but elsewhere in Italy and Europe, Saviano documents their power and the degree to which the Camorra is part of the regular economic order. Properly attacking the Camorra isn't a matter of going into bad neighborhoods and rounding up the hit men and their bosses when the violence gets out of hand. It's a matter of cleaning up the Italian economy as a whole, and arresting many purportedly upstanding businessmen and politicians who have never seen a Neapolitan slum firsthand.

Gomorrah attacks the mythologies through which the Camorra makes itself seem glamorous and powerful, and those through which it stifles any potential opposition. By detailing the bosses' preening and lack of taste, their aping of the style of Hollywood gangster movies, Saviano makes them seem at once thuggish and faintly ridiculous. This, as much as anything else, may be why the Camorra is angry with him. After all, Saviano describes how Camorra bosses have killed people—Camorra underlings as well as local gossips—who have simply mocked them in private letters or spread funny stories about them.

Saviano attacks the general fatalism of Campania simply and directly: he bears witness to what he has seen. Here, he leans on the example of the murdered priest Don Peppino, whose history is at the symbolic heart of Saviano's account. When, in 1991, Don Peppino wrote a public letter that denounced the Camorra, the politicians who had supported it and the political and economic system that perpetuated its power, he moved beyond laying the blame at the feet of individuals to identify, in Saviano's words, the "clear conditions, fixed mechanisms, identifiable and gangrenous causes" through which the Camorra perpetuates itself.

This letter, Saviano writes with nervous bravado, made "the bosses tremble…more than an anti-Mafia division blitz." Plain speech was a direct challenge to their power. Hence, Don Peppino had to be killed before his example caused others to start talking and acting in the same way. And his memory had to be sullied, through concocted and contradictory rumors that he had been a collaborator with the Camorra, that he had been killed because he had sexual designs on the female cousin of a boss, that he had failed in his duties as a priest by refusing to celebrate the funeral of a relative of the boss who killed him.

In writing *Gomorrah*, Saviano builds upon Don Peppino's example. He uses the writing style of Italian investigative reportage—terse immediate sentences, occasional use of the present tense to

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describe past events—to do things that Italian investigative reporters rarely do. He abandons any effort to set himself apart from that which he describes, instead relying on his own experiences, his own perceptions. In his description, you can't understand the Camorra and the society it has created without smelling "the hot breath of reality," touching "the nitty-gritty." (While he follows the journalistic habit of using the nicknames of Camorra bosses, he explains their etymology and cultural importance.) His proofs of the Camorra's crimes are "partial," and hence "irrefutable." They have been "recorded with my eyes, recounted with words, and tempered with emotions that have echoed off iron and wood."

It's difficult to convey how well he does this, how well he writes. His almost religious commitment to the power of the written word doesn't bespeak a naïve faith in plain description of facts—what he presents instead are his complex, sometimes contradictory impressions, the experiences that gave rise to them and the past that gave rise to him. He's not a sociologist but a novelist of the fact, and he is well aware of the ambiguities of his own position. He believes that the truth is a highly important weapon, but he doesn't present himself as a simple truth-teller or as someone who isn't at least partly shaped by the society that he wants to destroy. In an important passage, he goes to the tomb of the film director Pier Paolo Pasolini, famous for his leftist politics and his denunciations of Italian corruption and consumerism, but specifically disavows Pasolini's posthumous beatification, saying that he sees him as neither "my secular saint nor a literary Christ."

Saviano's Campania is a country that has become a wasteland hidden in plain sight. The closing pages invoke a potent metaphor of fecundity gone wrong:

> Rubbish has swollen the belly of southern Italy, stretching it like a pregnant belly, but the fetus never grows; it aborts money, then immediately becomes pregnant again, only to abort and conceive again, to the point where the body is ruined, the arteries are clogged, the lungs filled, the synapses destroyed. Over and over and over again.

The metaphor is jarring, but Saviano shows how physically apt it is. Much of the economy of Campania depends on "abusive" building and the illegal disposal of toxic waste. People are terrified when a landfill opens near their homes; they know that it will likely be used by Camorra-sponsored businesses to hide illegal and toxic trash. There are markets in everything—children dig with hands and spoons for illegally dumped human bones, which come from graveyards elsewhere in Italy that are too full. A skull with teeth in good condition will fetch 100 euros as a curio in the flea market; an intact rib cage is worth 300 euros. All of Campania is, in a sense, an economy of the junkyard, built on toxic, corrosive trash that becomes more poisonous each time it is reused.

In *Excellent Cadavers* (1995), his excavation of the junkyard of modern Italian politics, Alexander Stille writes about how Giovanni Falcone, the anti-Mafia magistrate, found himself increasingly isolated as he pursued his fight against the bosses. Saviano clearly expected a similar fate after writing *Gomorrah*. He didn't anticipate much public reaction beyond derision, another round of a "useless battle in which you're sure to play the role of the loser." It isn't hard to see why; his book points to the need for profound changes in Italian politics. As Stille documents in his recent book *The Sack of Rome*, the former prime minister and current leader of the opposition, Silvio Berlusconi, employed a fixer with strong Mafia connections as his right-hand man for many years and has never been able satisfactorily to explain the sources of his early wealth. The written word, however eloquent and explosive, isn't enough on its own. A

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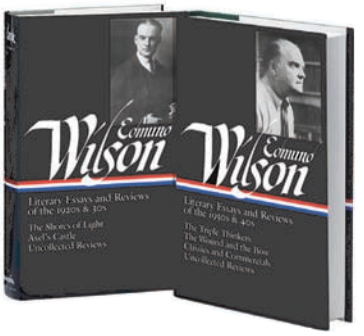

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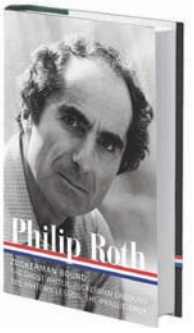

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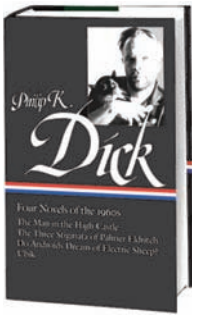

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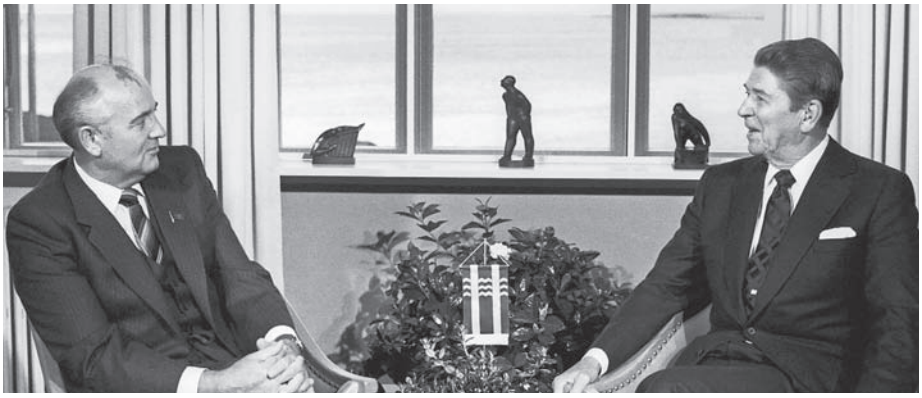
political system in which a man like Berlusconi can come to dominate politics is not one that will face up to the task of clearing the filth out of the stables without radical and unlikely reforms.

This makes Saviano's political position a complicated one. Although *Gomorrah* has become a bestseller in Italy and won the prestigious Viareggio prize, Saviano lives in hiding. He has spoken in interviews about his loneliness and isolation. Saviano hasn't prevailed, but it would be an enormous mistake to treat him as either a victim or a martyr. As his discussion of Pasolini implies, Italians have a highly problematic tendency both to neuter and beatify their naysayers ex post facto by treating them as saintlike figures doomed by their idealism and the impracticality of their ideas. One of the many excellent qualities of Stille's history of the Mafia is that it opposes this process of mythification by stressing that the revered anti-Mafia prosecutors Giovanni Falcone and Paolo Borsellino were real human beings working within a messy political system.

Roberto Saviano isn't a saint, and he doesn't want to be one. In the closing pages of *Gomorrah*, he reflects on what it would be like if he were Steve McQueen in the final scenes of the film *Papillon*,

> floating away on a sack of coconuts. It was an absurd thought, but at certain moments there's nothing else to do but humor your own delirium as something you don't chose [*sic*] but simply endure. I wanted to shout, to scream, to tear my lungs out like Papillon. I wanted to howl from deep down in my gut, my throat exploding with all the voice left in me: "Hey, you bastards, I'm still here!"

Whenever or wherever Saviano touches land again, he's still going to be an awkward customer. Even if he isn't winning, he's doing his damnedest to stop people from smoothing away the inconvenient truths of his work. ■



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Gorbachev and Reagan meet for the first time at the Geneva summit, 1985.

A Colder War

by JONATHAN SCHELL

Arsenals of Folly
The Making of the Nuclear Arms Race.
By Richard Rhodes.
Knopf. 386 pp. $28.95.

When Richard Rhodes's *The Making of the Atomic Bomb* appeared in 1986, it was widely and rightly recognized as a masterpiece of historical writing. Its genre is that of the chronicle written soon enough after the events in question to convey their atmosphere and the feelings they stirred yet distant enough to permit dispassionate analysis. (Thucydides' *The Peloponnesian War* was perhaps the first great work of this kind; Hannah Arendt's *The Origins of Totalitarianism* is a more recent example.) *The Making of the Atomic Bomb* also sits on the very narrow shelf of books that, by some alchemy not easily understood, grasp the dread but notoriously human truth of the nuclear danger. A few other books on that shelf—to offer a nonexclusive and no doubt opinionated listing—are John Hersey's *Hiroshima*, Michihiko Hachiya's *Hiroshima Diary*, Robert Jay Lifton's *Death in Life* (among other works of his, including his recent *Superpower Syndrome*), Gar Alperovitz's *The Decision to Drop the Atomic Bomb and the Architecture of an American Myth* and Martin Sherwin and Kai Bird's recent biography of Robert Oppenheimer, *American Prometheus*.

Rhodes made several stylistic and structural decisions that proved indispensable to the stature of his book. In the first place, he turned his historical microscope up to a power at which the actions and personalities of his cast of characters were made visible to the reader. A forbidding subject—the Manhattan Project and the scientific discoveries that made it possible—became a tapestry of individual lives. The British scientist Ernest Rutherford, pioneer of the landscape within the atom; the ineffable Hungarian scientist and persistent nuclear disarmer Leo Szilard, who persuaded Einstein to write Roosevelt in 1939 recommending that he start a nuclear-weapon program (an act Szilard later regretted); Oppenheimer, who seemed to combine the personalities of a dozen people in one skin; the great physicist Niels Bohr, as wise in the ways of the new politics required by the bomb as he was in the elementary new physical principles that had made it possible—all these people and dozens of others spring to life in Rhodes's pages. And thanks to the same immersion in detail, as well as Rhodes's talent for explicating science to the layperson, the stories of scientific discoveries—from Bohr's unfolding of the structure of the atom to George Kistiakowsky's solution to the problem of imploding the plutonium core of history's first atomic bomb—become absorbing, suspenseful dramas. It turns out to be quite remarkable how much science one can understand without being a scientist.

In the second place, Rhodes casts his historical net wide, sweeping in events that at first thought might seem distant from the goings-on at Los Alamos, where the bomb was being put together in the early 1940s. These events include Hitler's murderous rage at Jews (not long after World War I, he expressed his view that if only 12,000–15,000 Jews were "held under poison gas," Germany's problems would end); the Munich negotiations of 1938; the attack on Pearl Harbor; the Nazi invasion of the Soviet Union in June 1941 and the Soviet counterattack in December of that year; the deliberate annihilation by firebombing of German cities ("INTENTION: to destroy Hamburg," read Most Secret Operation Order no. 173, and the intention was fulfilled); and the grisly battle for Okinawa, in which thousands of Okinawans were persuaded by the authorities to commit suicide by plunging off cliffs.

These collateral events are illuminating as the broad context in which the first decisions regarding the bomb were taken. But

Jonathan Schell is the Harold Willens Peace Fellow at The Nation Institute. His newest book is The Seventh Decade: The New Shape of Nuclear Danger.

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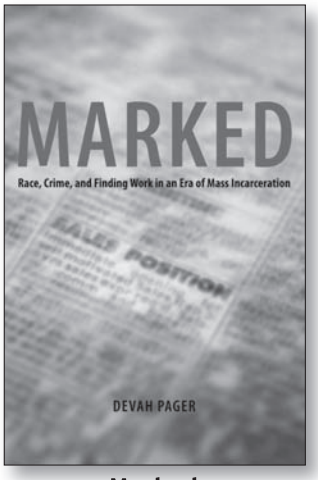

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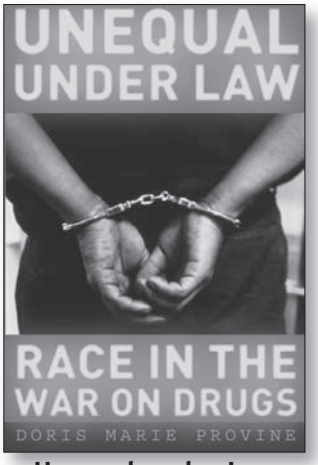

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they also serve an equally important narrative purpose. From its very beginnings, the bomb, like some malign, invisible deity, has repelled the direct gaze of human beings. In this special circumstance, Rhodes's collateral stories provide an oblique path to the central matter, walking the readers up to the edge of the abyss, even if they cannot look directly in. For the horrors of twentieth-century war and totalitarian rule were the moral and political steppingstones to atomic destruction as much as twentieth-century developments in physics were the scientific steppingstones to the invention of the device. The earlier, somewhat more comprehensible horrors acclimate the reader, so that by the time Rhodes describes the results on the ground at Hiroshima and Nagasaki (humankind's only experience of atomic destruction) readers are better prepared to absorb these unspeakable scenes—scenes that, for all their horror, are only the tiniest corner of the ones that would unfold in a full-scale nuclear holocaust.

With the publication in 1995 of Rhodes's *Dark Sun*, which recounts the birth of the hydrogen bomb, and now, of *Arsenals of Folly*, it's clear that Rhodes has been shouldering into view a project even more ambitious than *The Making of the Atomic Bomb*: a history that's nothing less than a portrait of the nuclear age. (A fourth and perhaps final volume is promised.) No other writer has undertaken such a project, and it is doubtful that any other writer could accomplish it if he were to try. Every age finds the writers it needs, and the nuclear age has found Richard Rhodes.

The Making of the Atomic Bomb had the literary advantage of covering events that formed an obvious, self-contained story, with a clear beginning (the scientific discoveries that made the bomb possible), middle (the actual "making" by the team at Los Alamos) and end (the bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki). However, if, like Rhodes, we look at this tightly connected series of events from a wider angle of vision, we see that they span two distinct ages: the age of world war, lasting from 1914 to 1945, and the nuclear age, from 1945 to the indefinite future. The line dividing the two is sharp because the revolutionary changes the bomb was to bring in its wake would rule out any further world war. (You could try it, but no one could win, for all would die.) The overlap of the two ages was short indeed, amounting to less than a month: the first atomic bomb was tested on July 16, 1945, in the New Mexico desert; the second was used on Hiroshima on August 6, the third on Nagasaki on August 9; and Japan signaled its readiness to surrender on August 14.

It was not inevitable that the making of the bomb would arrive in time to conclude the war. Nothing stops us from imagining that the scientists, who raced to complete the bomb in time to use it against Japan, might have required another year or two, in which case the bomb would have arrived in a world at peace. There probably would have been no occasion to use one to destroy a city. More important for the future, no impression could have been created that the bomb had ended a great war. The very unity of the story—spanning the transition from invention to use—created an appearance that the new weapon might not be so different from old ones: Like the U-boat, or the tank, or the B-29, the bomb seemed to be one more weapon for war. This picture of the bomb as a war-winning weapon was destined to become the most persistent illusion of the nuclear age and the greatest of all the obstacles to ending nuclear danger.

Rhodes, for one, has no traffic with this illusion. On the contrary, he seizes upon a completely opposite understanding of the nature of the bomb suggested by Niels Bohr, whom he quotes as saying, "We are in an entirely new situation that cannot be solved by war." Instead of being a weapon of war, the bomb was the nemesis of warring great powers. As Rhodes explains, Bohr saw

> all the way to the present, when a menacing standoff has been achieved and maintained for decades without formal agreement.... He wondered if the war-weary statesmen of the day, taught the consequences of his revelation, could be induced to forestall those consequences, to adjourn the game when the stalemate revealed itself rather than illogically to play out the menacing later moves.

After finishing *The Making of the Atomic Bomb*, Rhodes plunged into the new age, writing *Dark Sun*. The events recounted precluded the book from having the satisfying unity of its predecessor. For one thing, there was most fortunately to be no use of the H-bomb, much less of the whole infernal arsenal, to provide a natural conclusion to the book. (Of course, such an event likely would have finished off the book's writer, in which case there would have been no book at all.) For another, in 1949, the Soviet Union tested its first atomic bomb, demonstrating that the "secret" of the bomb could not be kept. The new age was to be open-ended. With the Soviet test and the arrival of the H-bomb, the nuclear story became less a specific chain of linked events in a single country and more like a mist spreading across the world, as the nuclear know-how passed from mind

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to mind and country to country (in the process later called "proliferation"), all the while haunting the minds of its first superpower possessors with a nervous insecurity and bottomless dread that they could neither quite face up to nor shake off.

In the face of these difficulties, Rhodes's modus operandi still serves him well. Again he tells individual stories; again he conducts the layman through scientific thickets in vigorous, lucid, compressed prose; again he casts his historical net wide. He tells the stories of the Soviet program to acquire the bomb (obtusely, Stalin, his mind clouded by the conventional wisdom of ideology, failed to understand the revolutionary import of the new weapon until it was used on Hiroshima); the growth of the American Strategic Air Command under Gen. Curtis LeMay; the debates among officials in the American government over whether to build the H-bomb, which many of them knew to be "genocidal"; the twisted and deranged security hearings that barred Robert Oppenheimer, the scientific leader of the A-bomb project, from access to H-bomb secrets.

Drawing on this material, he deepens the lesson he began to draw in *The Making of the Atomic Bomb*. Science had not created a weapon for war. Rather,

> fission introduced a singularity into the human world—a deep new reality, a region where the old rules of war no longer applied. The region of nuclear singularity enlarged across the decades, sweeping war away at its shock front until today it excludes all but civil wars and limited conventional wars.

Arsenals of Folly has no new bomb or other technical discovery to organize it, but it still has a center of gravity: the decades-long technical, bureaucratic and, above all, political struggle over the composition, size and ultimate disposition of the preposterously gigantic American and Soviet arsenals (65,000 thermonuclear bombs at their peak). Inasmuch as part of this story is the modestly successful effort, beginning in the late 1960s, to rein in the nuclear buildup, Rhodes turns in this volume from the making of the bomb to its unmaking, a task that has proven more difficult for those dedicated to it.

The struggle proceeded on two fronts. One was the civilian and military bureaucracies of the United States and the Soviet Union. Rhodes shows more vividly than anyone has before that, within the cold war between the superpowers, there was an even colder war being fought among factions within the nuclear establishments in Wash-

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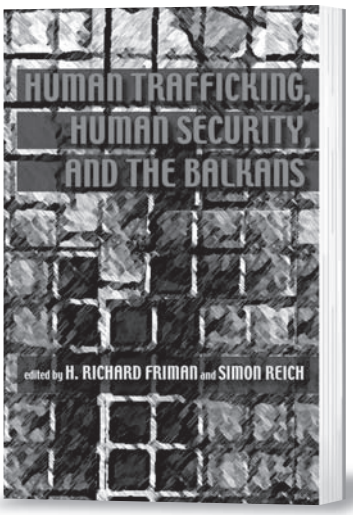

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ington and Moscow. George Shultz and other American officials tell Rhodes that these internal battles were more viciously contested than any with the Soviet Union.

On the one side were the hawks, persistently seeking to enlarge nuclear arsenals. In the United States, they were heirs to Hiroshima: the image of the bomb as a war winner set the stage for the rise of a postwar school of thought based on the conviction that nuclear war, like conventional war, could be fought and won. Its members believed that "Victory Is Possible," in the words of the title of an article written by two Reagan advisers, Keith Payne and Colin Gray, and they fought tenaciously for American nuclear superiority without end. For them, the idea that nuclear arms were not usable military instruments was anathema. In the words, quoted by Rhodes, of one of their number, the Harvard historian Richard Pipes, who became Reagan's National Security Adviser on Russian affairs, those who disagreed with the war-fighting school were "no more prepared to take seriously the proposition that nuclear weapons might be effective instruments of warfare than to waste time proving that the earth is not flat."

On the other side of the bureaucratic struggle were the disarmers and arms controllers—to speak comparatively, they were nuclear doves—who did indeed regard any notion that nuclear war could be won as a flat-earth sort of proposition. They took their stand on a factual foundation succinctly stated by Jerome Wiesner, President Kennedy's science adviser, who later became president of MIT.

> For most cities it is reasonable to equate one bomb and one city.... I would say 50 bombs, properly placed, would probably put a society out of business, and 300 such in each of the two countries leading the arms race would destroy their civilizations.

Curiously, after about 1960, when a debate raged over the usefulness of civil defense shelters in a nuclear war, the nuclear-war fighters did not attempt to rebut Wiesner's assessment, based as it was on proven facts regarding the destructive capacities of nuclear weapons. Instead, their point of attack was a series of allegations that the Soviet Union was ahead and therefore the United States needed to catch up. "Threat inflation" became their stock in trade. The allegations included the false charge that there was a "missile gap" in the late 1950s (there was one, but it overwhelmingly favored the United States) and repeated misleading charges in the '70s that the Soviet Union had gained a dangerous superiority (the truth was that the United States had the upper hand in some categories, such as the number of warheads, while the Soviets had it in others, such as the number of land-based missiles).

In the background of these debates was the less-discussed question of whether superiority in numbers mattered at all in a world in which Wiesner's 300 warheads could destroy any country's civilization. The war fighters resorted to a complicated argument: even if it were true that, say, the 30,000th warhead would only make the rubble bounce for the hundredth time (if there was any rubble left at that point), superiority was still important for "psychological" reasons. Nuclear bombs, in this view, were chiefly "political" weapons, and if people thought superiority was important, then their belief made it so. This belief was not held only by the war fighters; almost all nuclear strategists subscribed to a version of it. Strangely, it apparently never occurred to them that if a widespread false impression—a delusion—was the problem, then the solution might be not to bow to it, thus confirming it, but to dispel it, through statements, arguments and public education of all kinds.

The nuclear doves, of course, held that if a nuclear war would end civilization, it could not be won. In addition, they argued that once overkill had been obtained, any further buildup would be redundant; therefore, agreements bringing verified mutual reductions made sense. Each side in the debate had some successes: for the hawks, it was the gigantic arsenals themselves; for the doves, it was the web of arms control treaties—the atmospheric Test Ban Treaty, the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty, the first and second Strategic Arms Limitations Talks.

The second front on which the struggle over the cold war arsenals took place was that of heads of state. In *Arsenals of Folly*, Rhodes concentrates almost all his attention at this level on Reagan and Gorbachev, and he devotes several chapters to the evolution of their views, beginning with their boyhood years. He is right to do so because they brought something entirely new to the official debate. Traveling along their separate routes, both had somehow escaped the limitations of the war-within-a-war raging in their bureaucracies. Both were nuclear abolitionists. The paradoxes involved in this development, when superadded to the contradictions of conventional nuclear policy, are mind-boggling. How did a man of democratic and nonviolent bent like Gorbachev rise to the apex of a system as brutal as the Soviet Union's—and then propose full nuclear disarmament? How did Ronald Reagan, whose Administration gathered into one place the greatest number of nuclear war fighters ever assembled, arrive at the doves' conclusion, announced by him before the Japanese Diet in 1983, that "a nuclear war cannot be won and must never be fought"—and also champion full disarmament? The unbearable tragedy is that when the two leaders came within a hair's breadth of agreeing to proceed to their common goal at their summit meeting in Reykjavik, Iceland, in 1986, the enterprise was tripped up by misleading advice from some of the very war fighters whose premises Reagan had rejected.

That tale, which in Rhodes's hands reads like a first-class mystery story, is too complex to reprise here. Suffice it to note that not only was Reagan an unlikely nuclear abolitionist but, guided by a visceral revulsion against nuclear weapons, he may have been unwilling to launch nuclear retaliation even if the United States were attacked with nuclear weapons first. Rhodes quotes Reagan's adviser on Soviet affairs, Jack Matlock Jr.:

> I think deep down he doubted that, even if the United States was struck, that he could bring himself to strike another country with [nuclear weapons]. He could never hint, but I sort of sensed [that].

Amazingly, Gorbachev was of like mind. According to the Russian historian Vladislav Zubok, Gorbachev once participated in a war game simulating an American attack on the Soviet Union, but, when the critical moment came, balked. Later, Gorbachev stated in an interview:

> From the central control panel came the signal: missiles are flying towards our country, make a decision. Minute after minute passes, information pours in. I have to give the command for a strike of retaliation.... I said: "I will not press the button even for training purposes."

As Rhodes embarks on his fourth volume, he approaches the present moment, or whatever it will be when he finishes the book. History has yet to disclose the end of the epic he has committed himself to write. *Arsenals of Folly* gives plenty of cause for gloom, but also reasons not to abandon hope. Were the leaders of the two superpowers of that time not only fervent nuclear abolitionists but nuclear pacifists as well, as Matlock and Zubok suggest? If these reports are correct, they leave half a century of strategic calculation, all of which has depended on the certitude of nuclear retaliation, a shambles. They suggest that a radical rethinking of the conventional wisdom regarding nuclear arms is not only decades overdue but also possible. ■

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By John Fleming

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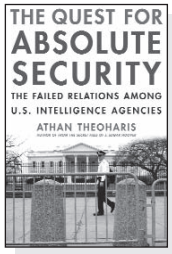

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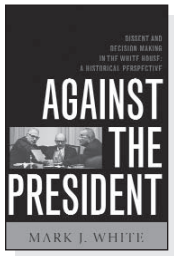

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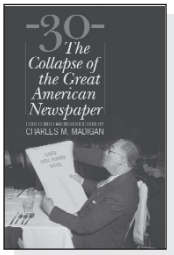

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survive. Twins Seven Seven,
"Iré"…
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dead again. We lifted shot
glasses filled with salmon fat.
"No life long enough," we
winced.
We'd been eating tacos and
falafels filled with confetti,
shredded newspapers. Head-
lines blackened our teeth… It
was
day after day of the dead again.
Repetition was what we had
and we worked it, Quag's toll
rose each day. There was the
it, then there was the it of it,
less
itself than a hum even we could
see,
Quag Nub's Pyrrhic limb… Some-
one's face was in a window squinting,
scrunched up, looked out intimating
what soul was. A bubble in my groin
made
me grimace, I looked up, long since in-
sistent we were it, it was us, Osiris's
chthonic run… Day after day of the
dead again. Day after day went by
without emolument. Nub's low
growl
and regret… It wasn't run what we
did, hesitation was what we had, no
step not taken back. Trepidation was
what
we had. No way could we breathe deep
enough, brace against what would
come… If we ran it ran with us. No way
could we be alive enough. Bumped
earth escaped us, lost in low scrub,
the it
of it given up, let go… There would be
bits of it ever after, its it scattered. This
would be known as time. So we read in
what would be our book should there be a
book,

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address not arrived as yet, book in abeyance,
book meant beginning to be gone… It
wasn't my face we saw in the window albeit
tunes
from my youth were in the book. "Little
Sunflower," "Equinox," "Doxy," on and
on, played by a beginners band. It was a sad
glad children's orchestra, an all-souls band
we
were told… Mock-awkward Monk it might've
been,
unintended, so tenuous it made us weep… We
sipped salmon fat, beginners against our will.
Vicarious consort, vicarious kin… Washed
ashore no one could say where, mystic
habitat,
Quag's necropolitan outskirts, Quaph… Day
after day went by, mock promise. Erstwhile
body, yet-to-be book, box yet to be within
earshot… More ghost of what it was than
an echo, long since not even a shell. So we
said
or said we saw, were told we saw… Whatsaid
savvy, apocryphal witness. Long since no longer
its it, more say than saw… Said we saw an
edge in front of us… The way the ground fell away
spoke
loudly. A pregnant star, dilated light… It was
the end of something risen, lifted up only to subside,
ythm's
hushed insistence it seemed… So it was in what
was
always aftermath, day after day of the dead
again, again no longer the it of it it was…
Book
said to be wet with lipsmear, seal against what
was
to come. Love's chronic lovers Nubstruck…
Quag's
quaint romance blown up… An ailing voice
would come out of it, box as much as book,
sing its heart out we'd say, begin
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humming, not the hum from before, Nub's
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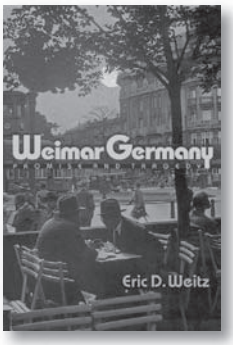

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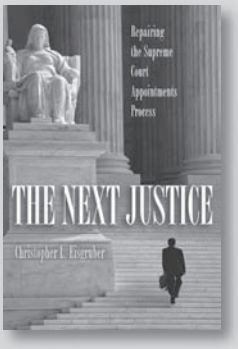

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Love by a Thousand Cuts

by BARRY SCHWABSKY

History, said Stephen Dedalus, was a nightmare from which he was trying to awake. For Kara Walker, history seems to be a nightmare she's trying to enjoy, perhaps in the sense that Slavoj Zizek urges his readers to "enjoy your symptom." Whether or not Walker succeeds in attaining this enjoyment through her work (I'll wager she does), lots of other people certainly do. Even in this era of immense and sudden success for certain young artists, it's hard to think of any who have come so far, so fast. A 1994 MFA graduate of the Rhode Island School of Design, Walker began to garner attention as soon as her work appeared in the "Selections 1994" show at the Drawing Center in New York; the next year she produced three one-person shows, two of them in public spaces, and by 1997 the artist, then all of 27 years old, had been given a MacArthur fellowship. Her work is in the most important American museums, and the European ones that own or have exhibited her art are nothing to sneeze at either. In New York alone, she's exhibited in the past four years at the Studio Museum in Harlem, the Met and the New School, not to mention Sikkema Jenkins, the commercial gallery in Chelsea that handles her work. And the art world shows no sign of Walker fatigue: A traveling retrospective of her work, *My Complement, My Enemy, My Oppressor; My Love*, which originated earlier this year at the Walker Art Center in Minneapolis, recently closed at ARC/Museé d'Art moderne de la Ville de Paris, where I saw it, and where it was called *Mon Ennemi, Mon Frère, Mon Bourreau, Mon Amour*. The retrospective, which includes three films, a dozen large-scale wall works and hundreds of drawings, watercolors and small paintings, has now arrived at the Whitney (through February 3), after which it will finish its tour at the UCLA Hammer Museum in Los Angeles (March 2–June 8).

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Kara Walker, *Cut*, 1998

Why is it that museums can't get enough of Walker's work? Early on, Walker found the holy grail of the contemporary art lover, an instantly recognizable amalgamation of technique and content not previously associated with any other artist—the aesthetic equivalent of what marketing gurus call a unique selling proposition. What struck the eye from the first were Walker's grand-scale figurative compositions made with cut-out black silhouettes affixed directly to the wall, and the neat way this folksy, traditional and domestic technique, expanded to the scale of a public mural and executed with a breathtaking precision and elegance, meshed with the subject matter: the violence of American black slavery recast as a perverse sexual fantasy. Here was *Uncle Tom's Cabin* as it might have been envisaged by a disciple of the Marquis de Sade, or *Mandingo* remade as a Matisse cutout, if Matisse had been a student of Aubrey Beardsley rather than of Gustave Moreau. The ironies thus generated are endless, delectably so: the use of a graphic technique that ruthlessly reduces everything to the polarity of black and white to evoke moral and psychological ambiguity and doubt, for instance, and favoring a mode of representation that makes it impossible to represent skin color in addressing questions of race.

The intensity of Walker's ambivalence about identity is evident even in one of the simplest of these mural silhouettes: a work from 1998 called *Cut* functions as a portrait of the artist, the "emancipated negress" we encounter in the archly elaborate titles of some of her other works. Here, the gesture of cutting that's the basis of Walker's silhouettes is given a surprising twist. With a pair of girlish braids and wearing a big flowing skirt, the figure in *Cut* seems to be rising into the air, kicking her heels together like Dorothy in *The Wizard of Oz* using her ruby slippers to go home. One outstretched hand clutches a straight razor, which has slit the other wrist so deeply that the hand, with its daintily spread fingers, is hanging on to the forearm by just a thread. Blood gushes up like a feathery geyser from the wrist, and a couple of puddles of it have gathered on the ground beneath her. Then one notices that the hand that holds the razor has somehow been slashed too—blood plumes from it as well, though less profusely—and for that matter the razor blade is hanging from its handle in the same way, as if it had even cut itself. This is an image of self-laceration as ecstasy beyond the dreams of your average paraphiliac.

What's important, though, is that the blade that's used to make the art is equated with the blade that draws the artist's own blood. *Cut* is the kind of expressionist melodrama Edvard Munch or Oskar Kokoschka would have understood, though in their day the creative artist could not be his own *femme fatale*. Yet its execution (the word suddenly becomes a strange sort of pun) is the opposite of Expressionist style as we normally conceive it—not disordered but precise, not turbulent but cool, not messy but clean, not demonstrative but formal, even downright prim. Walker draws blood, but her art is dry. She presents her work as concerning self-control in emotional extremity—where self-control does not necessarily mean keeping quiet but rather the opposite, being capable of a stylized gesture so extreme that it can only freak out its witness with its sublime indifference to self-sacrifice. The most extreme gesture in Walker's art, however, is one that is shown in this allegory of her self-

Barry Schwabsky, an American art critic and poet living in London, is co-editor of the international review section of Artforum. *His most recent book is* Vitamin P: New Perspectives in Painting.

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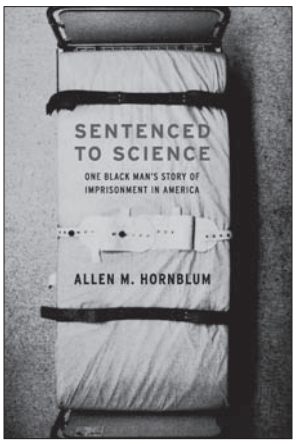

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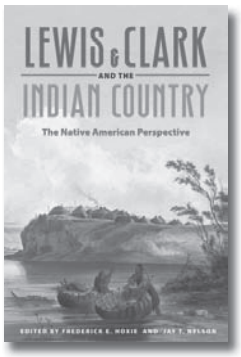

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conception as an artist, though it is nearly everywhere else in her *oeuvre*: the insistent equation of polymorphous carnal pleasure with the perverse power structure of slave society.

Maybe our delight in this copious phantasmagoria amounts to a sort of enlightened masochism. Although *Cut* implies that this is a form of self-wounding, Walker means to draw blood from the rest of us as well, and not just through pictures of master-slave orgies and the like. Thanks to Francis Picabia and Barbara Kruger, there may be nothing new about an artwork taking a verbally aggressive stance toward its public, but it's hard to remember any before that addressed its viewer as "Dear you hypocritical fucking Twerp," as Walker's does in *Letter From a Black Girl* (1998), a text displayed prominently on a wall in the retrospective, not to mention on the cover of its catalogue. That charming salutation pretty well sums up the mixed feelings that Walker cultivates with such feverish tenacity, and while her work can make you feel kind of beat up on, there's nothing quite like the jolt of being told "I hate you" by someone who really seems to mean "I love you"—the emotional up-and-down can be addictive.

It's easy to take a single figure like *Cut* as paradigmatic of Walker's vast, multifigured murals, starting with *Gone, An Historical Romance of a Civil War as It Occurred Between the Dusky Thighs of One Young Negress and Her Heart* (1994), because those works, eschewing traditional hierarchical composition, are spread across the wall as concatenations of isolated figures or, more typical, tight little groups of two or three, cut from the same sheet. The most complicated of them, if not quite the largest, also gets the longest title: *Slavery! Slavery! Presenting a GRAND and LIFE LIKE Panoramic Journey into Picturesque Southern Slavery or "Life at 'Ol' Virginny's Hole' (sketches from Plantation Life)" See the Peculiar Institution as never before! All cut from black paper by the able hand of Kara Elizabeth Walker, an Emancipated Negress and leader in her Cause* (1997). But the scenes it shows are comparatively tame by Walker's standards. Sure, there's a bit of farting and pissing going on, and a couple screwing on a rooftop—but nothing like the sadomasochism and child abuse that turn up with such regularity elsewhere in her work. For that matter, most of these pieces—unlike her later film works—may actually be a good bit less obscene in reality than they become in one's retrospective imagination of them. In part that's because "her characters"—as one of Walker's savviest supporters, Hamza Walker (no relation), director of education at the Renaissance Society of the University of Chicago, put it—"shamelessly engage in the most shameless acts." They are without shame because the silhouette technique empties Walker's figures of all inner life—the better to stir that of their viewers. Equally, the figures are disconnected from one another. In all these pieces, there is little or no narrative connection between these figures and small groups, just a freewheeling Bruegelesque concurrence between them.

As early as 1998, Walker admitted that she was "sort of" getting tired of doing the cutouts. Around 2000 she began experimenting with abstract colored projections on the walls to which the cut-paper silhouettes were affixed. The results were not successful, on the whole: in works like *Darkytown Rebellion* (2001) the figures seem a bit lost amid a garish multiplicity of colors to which they have no relation. Walker once said that in her student work, "I used to avoid the face issue by just kind of mashing up different colors," and here, likewise, the use of color seems a distraction.

Since 2004 she has been exhibiting animated films, which represent a more decisive broadening of her aesthetic—precisely because her work in the medium is formally so much rougher, less refined, than her paper cutouts, though in retrospect the multiplic-

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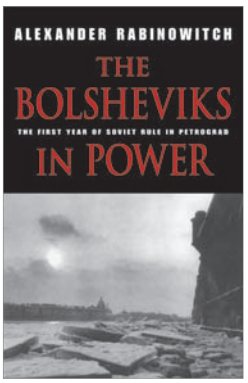

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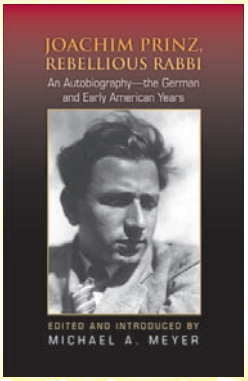
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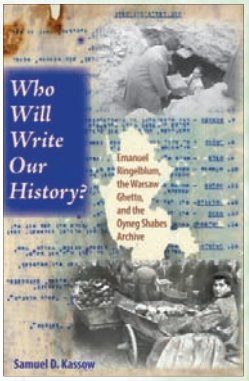

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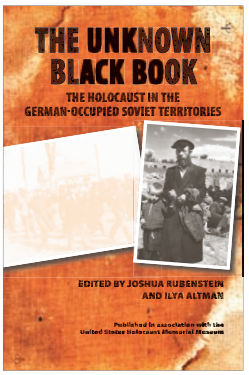
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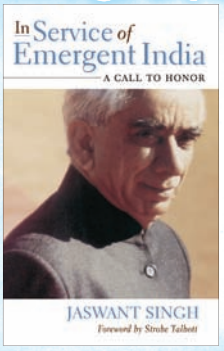

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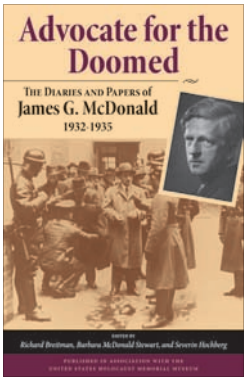

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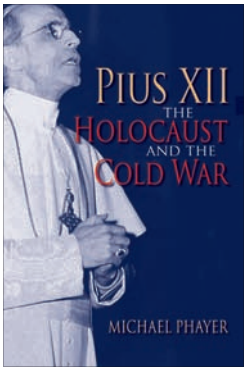

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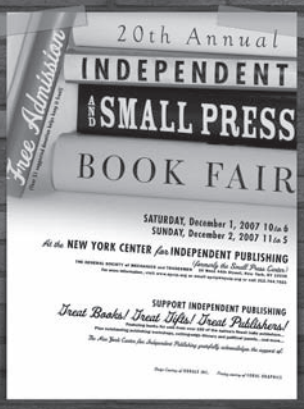

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ity of vignettes in her murals leads naturally to the sequence of scenes in a film. The first of them, *Testimony: Narrative of a Negress Burdened by Good Intentions*, takes off from the premise that white men have become slaves to black women. *8 Possible Beginnings or: The Creation of African-America, a Moving Picture by Kara E. Walker* (2005) is a more episodic fantasia on the fate of blacks under slavery. In these films the narrative, such as it is, is played out by hand-manipulated shadow puppets—not unlike those used by the South African artist William Kentridge in some of his films (for instance, *Shadow Procession*, from 1999), except that Walker handles hers in an ostentatiously crude way that makes the work feel like something produced by a brilliant but emotionally disturbed child who's been given her first camera as a birthday present.

Above all, the imaginary world of the shadow puppets is never allowed to occupy the viewer's attention completely. Instead, one is constantly made aware of the arbitrary manipulation (in both senses of the word) of these hapless figures by the even more shadowy figure of the person who moves them about—her hands are often visible, and in one segment of *8 Possible Beginnings*, we see a young woman, presumably the artist herself or in any case her stand-in, earnestly cutting a silhouette—her model is a white man in a hat—after which an intertitle congratulates her: "Good job, Bess!" In *Testimony*, we even get to see a milky, viscous fluid spatter over the image, in case we didn't get the masturbatory gist. Childish in a different sort of way is the specific form of fantasy *8 Possible Beginnings* engages at one point, where the distinction between the sexes has no meaning. In one episode, a rather frail-looking master engages his handsome male slave, first in a bout of fellatio, then in anal sex—which results in the young man's pregnancy and then the birth of their not-exactly-human offspring.

Walker, according to a leaflet at ARC, "accounts for the relationships between black and white people, master and slave, segregation and its inherent contradictions," and "counterbalances the American official history as propagated by cinema and literature"—an essentially realist rationale for her art that's not uncommon in commentary on her work. Such deadening verbiage strains to find edifying significance in the fraught and unruly fantasies Walker throws in our faces. All of her work makes clear, *8 Possible Beginnings* just a bit more blatantly than the rest, that any basis it may have in historical or even in biological reality is completely circumstantial. Slavery becomes a metaphor for sex—and, why not, for love—as much as sex becomes a trope for slavery. Not that this lets anyone off the hook. There's no writing off Walker's inventions as the byproducts of a deranged imagination—as if she were some sort of black female art-world-insider counterpart to Henry Darger.

But this is just where interpretation gets tricky. "None of this is about her own fantasies," insists the exhibition's curator, Philippe Vergne, deputy director and chief curator at the Walker Art Center. "It is about the codes of representation and their power." Yet any such intellectual impersonality is constantly belied by the incandescent tone of Walker's work. And after all, how powerful could those codes be if they weren't able to generate some pretty urgent fantasies? Likewise, another contributor to the exhibition catalogue, cultural historian Sander Gilman, works overtime to establish that attacks on Walker for pandering to racism and sexism—and it's not surprising that they've come up—must be misguided because art cannot be "a mimetic mirror of the inner life of the artist," cannot be unambiguously traced back to "the character of the artist." But while the causal connections may be interestingly oblique and tenuous, still, the art comes from precisely what the painter and occasional critic Carroll Dunham, writing in *Artforum*, has called "the hostile, raunchy, ironic consciousness driving Walker's art."

Some of Walker's most fascinating work consists of writing,

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whether embodied in vinyl lettering on a wall, as with *Letter From a Black Girl*, or scribbled on paper to be presented as a form of drawing either with or without any pictorial accompaniment. It would be a mistake to rely too heavily on these texts to interpret her other works—they are artworks too, posing their own hermeneutical challenges, not commentaries—but they help underscore what may be slightly more obliquely indicated by the murals, films and other pieces: that all this is intensely personal to Walker, and that precisely for this reason, it reflects her hyperawareness of context—above all the art-world context that, as the daughter of an artist, she must have been at least tangentially aware of since childhood. "I knew that the only way to gain an audience in the art world was to cloak my work in the guise of blackness," we read on one sheet from the sometimes almost embarrassingly diaristic 1997 drawing series *Do You Like Creme in Your Coffee and Chocolate in Your Milk?* "I would have to make work that was so directly racial that no one could help but notice." Since she could hardly pass as white, she would have to pass as black.

This paradoxical strategy undoubtedly explains the angry reaction Walker's work—or rather its quick success—aroused among a number of prominent older black women artists: in her they see a black woman putting on blackface. Walker's ruminations, however, convey an almost excruciating sincerity at odds with the canny trickster we imagine behind the insolent films and murals. But if they also suggest a calculated bid to manipulate the white, liberal art world in the interest of success, what about the fantasy, recounted elsewhere in the sequence, of seducing none other than David Duke, "to 'bring down'… the former Klansman and almost Louisiana Senator in SCANDAL!" Well, more surprising things than that have happened.

Still, as for scandals, Walker may have caused a few, but they've been small change compared with the honors heaped on her. Does that mean she's doing something so right it's wrong? I don't think so. Whoever her public is—and they're not all white men like me—she does "bring us down" to dwell amid appalling desires and admit they might be or become one's own. "But that I would fuck an avowed RACIST—not at all unusual," writes Walker in *Do You Like Creme*. "Since all I want is to be loved by you And to share all that deep contradictory love I possess. Make myself your slave girl so you will make yourself my equal—if only for a minute." Walker turns out to be a closet utopian, and it's not her scathing humor or her obscenity that's made her loved—it's her perverse optimism. ■

The Nijinsky of Ambivalence

by MORRIS DICKSTEIN

In 1967 Norman Mailer went to Washington for the march on the Pentagon to protest the Vietnam War. He was joined by 100,000 other Americans. As one of many antiwar demonstrations around the nation, the march might be largely forgotten today had he not written an article about it that took up an entire issue of *Harper's* and was then expanded into a book, *The Armies of the Night*, that won the National Book Award and the Pulitzer Prize. In late October, on the fortieth anniversary of the march, a number of us gathered at Georgetown University to think back on the meaning of the march by reconsidering Mailer's momentous book about it, for it is rare that literature and history—a great writer and a great subject—have been so closely interwoven. Mailer himself had intended to be there as the main speaker, but illness kept him away. He died on November 10, at 84, putting a period to one of the most challenging and unpredictable careers in modern letters.

Because Mailer was such a self-conscious writer—peering around corners, casing every angle in complex prose—it's hard to raise questions about his work that he did not anticipate. Early in *The Armies of the Night*, he wonders whether it's valid to "write an intimate history of an event which places its focus on a central figure who is not central to the event." He counters that "the March on the Pentagon was an ambiguous event whose essential value or absurdity may not be established for ten or twenty years, or indeed ever." Mailer suggests that the organizers, as serious men, devoted to a cause, are in no position to plumb that ambiguity. "For that," he says, "an eyewitness who is a participant but not a vested partisan is required," in this case "a comic hero…a ludicrous figure with mock-heroic associations."

This approach, revolving around a partly fictionalized version of himself, proved to be an innovation in political reportage. It helped kick off a new form of participatory journalism. Every word in this rationale is telling, molded to Mailer's own specifications. An *intimate* history is what a novelist—rather than a journalist or historian—would write. If it's potentially *absurd*, then it requires a special kind of writer with a feeling for the zany, the paradoxical, someone alert to the comic possibilities of his reluctant participation. If its significance remains ambiguous, hard to pin down, who better to make sense of it than a reflective, introspective writer who had long made ambivalence his specialty—in a later book he would call himself the "Nijinsky of ambivalence."

The import of the march was elusive partly because it was a media event directed at public opinion rather than a concrete political act with clearly defined goals. It was meant to show that the American people no longer supported the war, that some Americans were in fact outraged by it. They were marching, he says, "on a bastion which symbolized the military might of the Republic, marching not to capture but to wound it symbolically." (This might remind one of 9/11, an attack on the Pentagon that was both real and symbolic.)

Later, after being arrested, the war novelist asks Walter Teague, a militant activist, what he would have done had he "managed to get into the Pentagon and hold a corridor for a while." "Oh, I don't know," says Teague. "We could have painted the walls, created disruption generally," a response finely redolent of the '60s left. One might say that *The Armies of the Night* was Mailer's way of painting the walls, creating a kind of disruption. During the march itself, his immediate goals were symbolic, not concrete, as he happily confesses:

§ He wanted to draw attention to the cause by way of his own celebrity, the media notoriety that he fed with his drunken behavior his first night in Washington—getting sloshed on bourbon, pissing on the men's room floor in a theater where he and other star participants had gone to raise a bail fund to aid those arrested on the march, then behaving pugnaciously, almost incoherently, as MC for the evening.

§ He wanted to get arrested, preferably sooner rather than later, so that he could be quickly released to get back to New York in time for a much-anticipated party.

§ He aimed to restore luster to his somewhat tarnished public image, which served the cause but also would be served by it. Hence the competitiveness, the minute calculations of position vis-à-vis other notables like Robert Lowell and Dwight Macdonald, his peers in the front rank of protesters—the prow of the ship, you might say.

One emotionally direct moment comes that first night after Lowell, visibly depressed,

Morris Dickstein teaches English and theater at the Graduate Center of the City University of New York. His most recent book is A Mirror in the Roadway: Literature and the Real World *(Princeton).*

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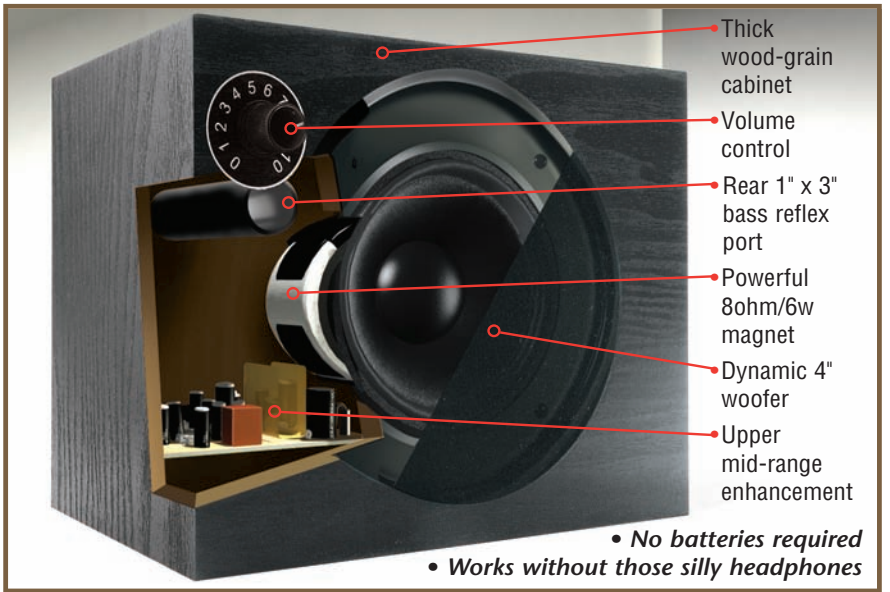

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reads his poetry aloud to a rapturous response from an audience that had just hooted Mailer down: "Mailer felt hot anger at how Lowell was loved and he was not." Yet Mailer also knows that he and Lowell are there for another purpose, equally symbolic: to bear witness, to dissociate themselves publicly from the war, to purge themselves of complicity with what, as Americans, was being prosecuted in their name. This was the deepest motive my wife and I felt as young, anonymous participants testifying mutely with deeds known only to ourselves. Mailer, on the other hand, could put a megaphone to his actions, and to the whole march, even as he would later set out to crystallize its meaning. For many of us—and surely for those who weren't there—the march on the Pentagon would dissolve into Mailer's sensational *Harper's* article and later his book about it, both of which would burst forth in the pivotal year of 1968.

Mailer understood that he was in a different position from the other marchers. He tells us only on page 133, with a hint of embarrassment, that a British camera crew was documenting his every move, making his participation all the more theatrical. (The director, Dick Fontaine, showed up at Georgetown with his film, which has only recently resurfaced. With its jerky hand-held camera work, it came through as a crude but faithful adaptation of the public moments in Mailer's book, though it was all done before his book came out.) Mailer's keen appreciation for the nimbus of staging and feeling around politics was one reason he was so charmed, as we all were, by the hippies' attempt to levitate the Pentagon and exorcise its demons, which especially suited Mailer's strong sense of the magical and the irrational, of evil as a palpable presence. This had been a major thread in his novel *An American Dream*, published three years earlier. But the heavy-breathing intensity and violence of that book had outraged many readers, just as the rollicking profanity of his next novel, *Why Are We in Vietnam?*, had left readers indifferent and Mailer himself disappointed. As much as the war and the antiwar movement, these relative failures provided a context for *The Armies of the Night*. Though famous and occasionally notorious for almost twenty years, Mailer was in one of the periodic troughs of his literary reputation, and also perhaps of his usually robust self-confidence.

Just before the Pentagon march, Mailer told his friend and editor E.L. Doctorow, "I feel I'm washed up. I feel I'm out of it now. It's passed me by." In *Armies* he puts this more gently—in the third person, as usual: "His career, his legend, his idea of himself—were they stale?" Mailer was twenty years older than most of the protesters. Like many middle-aged figures of the postwar generation, he wondered whether the 1960s had put him in the shade, out of touch, unable to connect. In the book Mailer emphasizes how detached he feels from others on the march: the earnest organizers; the tweedy academic liberals; the uninhibited young, who have no sense of sin and for whom sex is no more than the gymnasium of love (though Mailer, by his own account, had worked out quite a bit in that gym). He portrays himself at first as out of sorts, out of place, a man who doesn't really want to be there but is merely lending himself to the occasion. Only in the curve of the unfolding plot, for this *is* a kind of novel, after all, will he assume his rightful position in the front lines of a new generation.

Initially, Mailer had no plans to write about the march, let alone to make it a large chunk of his autobiography. But in the course of the weekend, his instincts, both private and public, told him that the march was no isolated event. He gradually realized that it summed up the whole anguished decade, gathering all its cultural and political strands,

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from the hippies and liberals to the military-industrial, all in one time and place. Whatever the '60s were about, it was happening here, at this very juncture, at an event that took its cue from the great civil rights march of four years earlier. Mailer's stance toward this was, as usual, ambivalent—he was a virtuoso of mixed feelings—but his instinct for finding the right subject, at least right for him, kicked in. He promised to write 20,000 words in a single month for Willie Morris at *Harper's*; by the end of the month, working twelve to fourteen hours a day, he had written some 90,000. With the addition of a more factual, less subjective "Book Two," the volume was dispatched quickly, and it restored Mailer's slightly faded reputation to a level not seen since *The Naked and the Dead*.

Thanks to *The Armies of the Night*, Mailer became one of the iconic cultural figures of the '60s, not simply because of the book but in the book, in his self-portrayal as a semi-fictional character who moves from the edge to the center, from skepticism to commitment, from professional jealousy to solidarity, a man satisfied at last with his own performance. Filling out the arc of this plot, with its pattern of conversion, modest heroism and gradual self-discovery, is a mother lode of autobiographical detail about his background, his marriages, his pleasures and peeves, even his flaws of character, all bound up with an idiosyncratic assertion of patriotism amid protest. Mailer sees his own fate in tandem with the nation's at a troubled moment in its public life. It's hard to decide whether he hijacked history, making it an adjunct of his own story, or simply lent his persona to what became one of the decade's most penetrating interpretations of itself.

Mailer had pulled off this kind of coup before. The 1950s had been a period of personal problems and career reverses. His second and third novels, *Barbary Shore* and *The Deer Park*, in which he'd invested so much, had largely failed. Audiences and critics looking for another *Naked and the Dead* had been stymied by them. Fiction was beginning to look like a dead end for him. He edged into journalism, but the results were uneven; he had not yet found his voice. In *Advertisements for Myself* (1959), he rolled all these pieces, good and bad, ranging from book reviews and experimental stories to his Hip manifesto, "The White Negro," into one overarching narrative about himself, his travails in fiction, his wild-man image, his vast ambition, his blasted reputation, his new countercultural gospel, his loathing of the whole grim mood of the cold war decade. A strange and surprising alchemy

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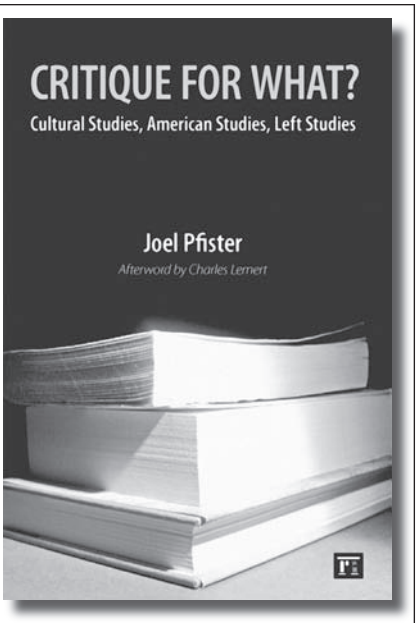

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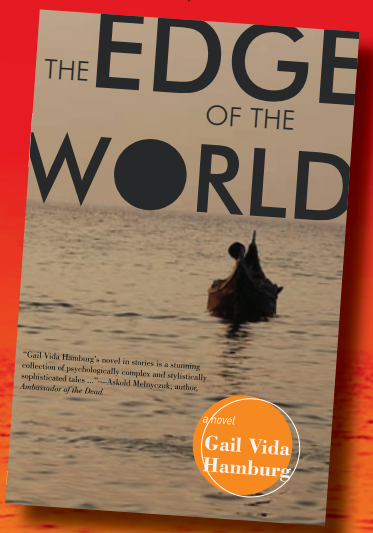

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took place. Suddenly, by filtering the world through his own capacious ego, Mailer had somehow reinvented himself, recouping actual losses into triumphs on the page.

This is exactly what he would do again, but in a comic vein, in his first big boxing piece, "Ten Thousand Words a Minute," a report on the heavyweight match between Floyd Patterson and Sonny Liston in 1962. Since the match had ended with a Liston knockout two minutes into the first round, it was really a nonevent, a potential washout for any journalist assigned to cover it. But by projecting himself into the center of the event as a mock-heroic figure, a blustering braggart—challenging Sonny Liston, attacking journalists, reaching deeply into the kind of blood sport boxing is—Mailer wrote not only one of his best essays but created the template for *The Armies of the Night*, turning marginality into a source of insight, firing up his cadenced prose to an astonishing degree of vividness and complexity, giving us a visceral sense of the occasion and heightening its theatricality by stealing center stage, at least in his own mind.

The clowning and weightless megalomania of "Ten Thousand Words a Minute," which appeared in *Esquire* in February 1963, gives way in *Armies* to a fresh take on the public culture of the '60s, matching the New Left's turn to what he calls "a new style of revolution—revolution by theater and without a script." This gives Mailer a new role to play and creates an opening for a classically American form of self-invention. Both at the march and later, as he is writing the book, his grandiose yet self-mocking improvisations, his lighthearted self-importance, buoyed by an authentic moral seriousness, manage to cut a wide swath through the spirit of the age—and also to capture it in print. ■

Many Exits

by MATT WEILAND

In the fall and winter of 1991, I spent a few cloistered months reading Joseph Conrad with Edward Said. There were twelve of us in his class, and our task was to read every work of fiction Conrad wrote and discuss them together twice a week. Said assumed that all of us cared as much as he did about what we were reading, so no time was wasted on details of class administration, and we approached our task with a sense of high purpose. From *Almayer's Folly* to the late existential works like *The Shadow-Line*, we would take turns reading a brief passage and discussing why it was there, what Conrad meant for us to see. Said wanted to know what Conrad meant on every page, in every paragraph, in every line. Why this word and not some other? In class, Said had the pugnacious charm of a boxer, and his response to a wayward effort to make sense of what we were reading could be fierce. "No, Mr. Weiland," he would say. "That isn't it at all." There was an intense restlessness in that room, as though a bomb needed defusing and the clock was ticking down. I was glad to be working with wires and explosives.

One day in the middle of the semester Said arrived, as usual, after we had arranged ourselves around the table. Unlike every other classroom I've known, there was no talk between students in those anxious moments before class began: we waited, always, in silence. But on this day a student we hadn't seen before was standing in the doorway. As Said took his seat, the student addressed him, saying he was a one-time visitor who'd come to audit the class.

"Is it still OK if I join you today?" he asked good-naturedly.

Said, unsmiling, jerked his head toward the door. "No, get out."

"But I was told—"

"Get out!"

The student scurried out before any of us could catch his eye; we were too busy trying not to catch Said's. He was fuming and his flushed fingers were clenched around a pen. He didn't turn back to us until the student had gone and the door was shut. It was as though he had erupted. A moment later, he took a breath, looked at us blankly and asked someone to read from that day's assigned portion.

We never did learn the unfortunate young man's story. I suppose he had made arrangements with an assistant who had neglected to tell Said. Or perhaps he had spoken with Said himself, who had simply forgotten. I don't know. But I won't forget Said's astonishing anger.

We didn't know then that Said had not long before been given a seemingly "fatal medical diagnosis," as he later described it: leukemia. He would endure years of chemotherapy and other brutal treatments, and he lived until 2003. But that fall the new diagnosis was in the air, and death was in his eyes.

Exit Ghost
by Philip Roth.
Houghton Mifflin. 292 pp. $26.

What happens in Philip Roth's new novel, *Exit Ghost*, isn't hard to summarize: Roth's novelist hero, Nathan Zuckerman, having spent a decade in an isolated house in the Berkshires, returns to New York to see a Mount Sinai urologist about his prostate cancer. Zuckerman is 71, impotent, incontinent and absorbed in rereading Joseph Conrad for the first time in fifty years. He's got *The Shadow-Line* with him. In the week he spends in the city, he encounters a frail and head-scarred Amy Bellette, the object of his youthful infatuation in *The Ghost Writer*; she is undergoing treatment for brain cancer at the same hospital. During the week, Zuckerman learns that a 30-year-old woman and her husband are looking to swap their Manhattan apartment for a country retreat; he swiftly makes the woman, Jamie Logan, the object of his infatuation.

Add a great deal of clumsy erotic fantasy and itchy, repetitive rumination on the nature of fiction and biography, and… that's about it. And yet it is an enormously affecting dirge on the theme of physical, political and social decline. Once alive to the moment, Zuckerman is now out of sorts and out of step: he expects groceries to be packed in boxes rather than bags, he rails against cellphones, he wonders who Tom Cruise is. He laments his lost time, his lost appetites, his lost desires, his lost place in the world. Even his passion for America, which so strongly colored the earlier Zuckerman novels, has faded. Having been "enthralled by America for nearly three-quarters of a century," he explains, he moved to the remote countryside to "remain in America without America's ever again being absorbed in me."

Zuckerman isn't the only one doing the lamenting. While he no longer cares enough to vote, Jamie and her husband, Billy, are earnest and engaged liberals. A scene in which the three of them watch the 2004 presidential election results captures the dying light of that dismal night: early on Jamie and Billy hear from friends at the Democratic national headquarters that "exit polls showed Kerry winning all the states he needed"; later Jamie, out to pick up food, gathers from passersby that things don't look good in Ohio; when she returns, her husband begins to sour as they wait for further word. Finally, as it becomes clear that Bush has won the election, Jamie bursts: "This is now the night before it all got even worse!" With a playwright's gift for pacing a scene, and mix-

Matt Weiland is the deputy editor of The Paris Review.

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ing interior monologue with dramatic exchange, Roth ends this one with Zuckerman at once drawn by Jamie's passion and distanced from it. "She was…looking at me the way somebody being helped from a burning building or freed from a car crash looks at you, as though as an observer you might have something to say that could account for the catastrophe that's altered everything."

But most of all, the book chronicles Zuckerman's flickering rage against his own decline. He removes himself from the stage only to jump back in front of the footlights ("Back in the drama, back in the moment, back into the turmoil of events!"), then remembers—and is constantly reminded—that his time is nearly up. In Central Park, a would-be literary biographer shouts at him, "You're dying, old man, you'll soon be dead! You smell of decay! You smell like death!"

Exit Ghost is a meditation on time and the shape a life takes across it. This is Roth's subject from the first page, in which Zuckerman declares that he has "ceased to inhabit not just the great world but the present moment," to the last, in which Zuckerman tells young Jamie as she resists his outrageous advances that she is finally "crossing Conrad's shadow-line, first from childhood into maturity, then from maturity into something else." Zuckerman even mentions wanting to call his next book *Then and Now*.

At the center of it all is Zuckerman's relationship with Amy Bellette. Much of the emotional force of *The Ghost Writer* lay in his fantasy of her as a living, breathing Anne Frank. *Exit Ghost* reveals her true story: born in Norway to Lithuanian and Polish Jews, she fled in 1942 after her father was arrested by the Gestapo, first through the woods to Sweden and eventually to America. There are further revelations of family secrets in *Exit Ghost*, but it is the pathos of Zuckerman encountering Bellette reduced to rags in a tumbledown apartment in the East Village that leaves the ache. (There are resonances here of the extraordinary scene in *American Pastoral* when Swede Levov discovers his daughter Merry living in a decrepit hovel off a highway in Newark.)

The life Bellette leads has nothing in common with the majestic life Zuckerman had imagined her living with the great writer E.I. Lonoff on that snowy night in 1956. It is a future self that Zuckerman could not have imagined—and it galls him. "Coming back to someone after that span of time, and after I've had cancer and she's had cancer, our clever young brains both the worse for wear—maybe that's why I was close to trembling and why she had donned a long yellow dress in fashion, if ever, half a century before. Each of us so in need of this figure from the past. Time—the power and the force of time—and that old yellow dress over her defenseless frame overshadowed by death!"

Wanting her to fill in the story of those missing years, Zuckerman asks: "So what have you done, then?" *Exit Ghost*—indeed the Zuckerman novels as a whole—resembles an extended Shakespearean soliloquy on that gray word "done." It is at the root of all the strongest, sharpest questions we ask ourselves and others, the sorts of sentences that can take both question mark and exclamation point. Amy: "Done? What a word. Done. I've translated books.… That's what I've done. But mostly what I do is drift. I've just drifted and drifted and now I'm seventy-five. That's how I got to be seventy-five: continually drifting." Zuckerman: "This way or that, arrow or drifter, you still reach the end."

Roth has played with the experience of time in many of his late novels; in *Exit Ghost* his focus is not just on the arc that a life takes, what it feels like to trace the parabola of days and years, but on how painful it is to see other lives lose their shape and come undone. The novel presents an ambivalent view of life's vicissitudes: pain at the seeming failure of a life to live up to its promise, ac-

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- Luna Leopold

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ceptance that life is but a life lived. "I did what I did," says Zuckerman. "That's all one knows looking backward. I made the ordeal that was mine out of the inspiration and the ineptitude that were mine."

Exit Ghost is about whether we're astonished by death or by the life that precedes it. It is a book of many exits: from the ghost from *Macbeth* in the title, to the suicide of Zuckerman's neighbor in the first section, to the story Amy Bellette tells of Lonoff slowly dying, to the death threats Zuckerman imagines himself to be getting, to the real feeling of being swept off the stage that Zuckerman experiences.

Roth even takes as his epigraph a line from Dylan Thomas's poem "Find Meat on Bones," in which a dying father addresses his son. In the last stanza the father declares, "Doom on the sun!" The last line is the son's reply to the father: "Before death takes you, O take back this." This is the line that serves as the epigraph to *Exit Ghost*, a scratching plea to find some light in death's darkness.

But the most moving death in the novel, the one that captures Zuckerman's imagination, is that of George Plimpton. In the penultimate section Zuckerman recounts the story of his long friendship with Plimpton, and of Plimpton's antic enthusiasms, from boxing to birding. The whole scene, mixing history that seems wholly in the voice of Philip Roth but stitched into Nathan Zuckerman's life, is out of place, out of keeping with the narrative and disruptive of the plot—and it is perfect.

For Zuckerman, Plimpton's death is unimaginable, and it forces him to realize that there are indeed some things even he cannot imagine. "If I had been asked," says Zuckerman, "who among your contemporaries is least likely to die…the only answer possible would have been 'George Plimpton'…. The closest George would ever come to dying would be to simulate it in an article for *Sports Illustrated*."

Plimpton does die, and he dies unceremoniously and suddenly, which to Zuckerman is the final, impossible insult. "Humorously and unusually—that's how George and his friends imagined themselves dying back before they believed they would, back when dying was just another idea to have fun with. 'Oh, there's death too!' But the death of George Plimpton was neither humorous nor unusual. It was no fantasy either. He died not in pinstripes at Yankee Stadium but in pajamas in his sleep. He died as we all do: as a rank amateur."

In 1998 I attended a reading by Studs Terkel, then in his mid-80s, at an auditorium in the West Village. Fifteen minutes into the event, one of the organizers rushed up to the lectern and whispered something in Terkel's ear. He was quite deaf even then, and we in the audience could hear him saying "What? What?" to the organizer before confusion gave way to a stricken look of concern and raw fear.

It gradually became clear that Terkel's wife had had some kind of accident in Chicago, that she had seriously hurt herself at home and was being taken to the hospital. The message passed along to Terkel apparently included a firm suggestion that he should hurry home lest he arrive too late. The details weren't clear, of course, but there was a sympathetic shudder in the auditorium as Terkel made a hurried but dignified apology and hastened from the room.

As the audience got their coats and left, I milled about the lobby, a bit dazed, wondering which would be worse for Terkel: that public moment of discovery up there at the front of the stage, a thousand eyes watching him as he was informed of bad news, while the mind struggles to make sense of the senseless and sudden? Or the long flight home, the slow slog of processing it all, the private hours of not knowing, the mind free to imagine the worst and able to do nothing about it?

Terkel's books are above all full of the enormous vitality of the people he's interviewed. Disheartened in that dull lobby, what came to my mind were some extraordinarily buoyant lines he'd written in the preface to his first book, *Division Street: America*. "Being neither a sociologist nor a research man, motivational or otherwise, I followed no blueprint or book or set of statistics. I played hunches—in some instances, long shots. Irvin Cobb observed, 'All horse players must die broke.' Here is one who will die astonished."

Some novels resonate for the things they force us to forget, others for the memories they compel us to recall. Absorbed in the welter of the story, we find ourselves looking back from the page, at the hands that hold it, thinking of past blisters and broken bones, of the streets and people that made their mark. Like the writer, the reader may "meditate on the meaning of [his] own past," as Conrad wrote in the author's note to *The Shadow-Line*, until "it seems to fill all the world in its profundity and its magnitude."

Exit Ghost is both fish and hook: just when you think you're standing firm on the shore, deaf to the world as you watch the glinting fish thrash in the air, you find you're gasping for breath just below the waterline, a metal barb pricked in your lip. You remember carefree days with rod and reel back on solid ground as you struggle to break free, you shiver as the water rises and blood begins to seep out. You think: that fish is lovely! You realize: I'm hooked! And it's all over. ■

Pointe Work

by MARINA HARSS

Nureyev
The Life.
By Julie Kavanagh.
Pantheon. 782 pp. $37.50.

One of the pitfalls of biographical writing, it seems, is the tendency to seize the ugly side of one's subject (and what person does not have one?) and turn it into a pathology. In Greg Lawrence's 2003 biography of Jerome Robbins, *Dance With Demons*, the choreographer came through as a nasty, insecure paranoid; Diane Solway's otherwise highly informative 1998 biography of Rudolf Nureyev is framed by a prologue and epilogue describing the large fortune the dancer had amassed during his lifetime and his resistance to sharing it with others (including the tax man)—all true, of course. It is clearly a challenge to plunge into someone else's life; to relive it through letters, journals, police files and the reminiscences of friends; to do this over the course of years and years; and to come out on the other side with not only an encyclopedic grasp of that person's life but with the same—or greater—respect for the person, a respect that is born of knowledge, not the slavish enthusiasm of an admirer. Julie Kavanagh has done just that, and with great flair, in her massive new biography of Nureyev. She has resisted the tendency to belittle without relinquishing her clear, critical eye.

One could be put off by the book's length, but the truth is it doesn't really feel that long. It has its saggy bits, but most lives do too, including Nureyev's. During his years of superstardom in the mid-1960s and '70s, his relationships with people—famous friends, lovers, colleagues—became more superficial and less sincere; in some cases, the narrative

Marina Harss is a dance writer and translator living in New York.

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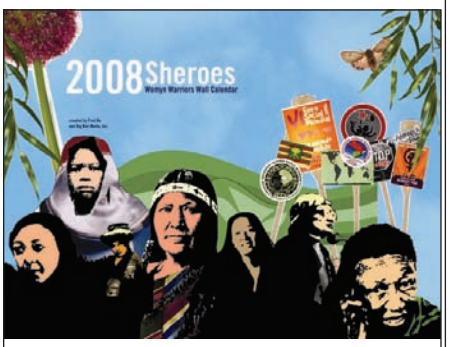

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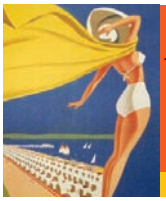

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drags. (I'm not sure I needed to know that Madonna wanted to hang out with him.) He also danced the same roles over and over again, on different stages. And his character hardened as well; his hunger for life, rebelliousness and drive—the qualities that made him such an irresistible force on the stage and off—were tempered with arrogance, impatience and, at times, downright nastiness.

But of course Nureyev's life was anything but dull. He had an exceptionally vivid personality—hyperactive, excessive—apparent from the very beginning. And then there is the intrinsic drama of the defining chapter of his life—his defection to the West in 1961, with all its ramifications for him, the ballet world and the people left behind. Kavanagh, who previously wrote a biography of the British choreographer Frederick Ashton, keeps her account of Nureyev's life moving with vivid prose and a talent for the informative digression. Her curiosity is wide-ranging; this is as much a cultural history and a history of ballet in the mid-twentieth century as a biography. Want to know what life was like in the remote Republic of Bashkiria, where Nureyev grew up, in the '40s? Or about the Vaganova method of ballet training, the backbone of the Kirov style? Or about Swinging London? It's all here. Kavanagh spirals into myriad variations, highly informative for the most part, but she also knows when enough is enough and it is time to return to the main theme.

COURTESY OF THE RUDOLF NUREYEV FOUNDATION

Nureyev in Balanchine's *The Prodigal Son*, 1973

Kavanagh opens the book with the breathless retelling—based on the memories of an eyewitness she discovered—of Nureyev's birth on March 17, 1938, on a train headed for Vladivostok. "Something was going on. In the corridor people were rushing back and forth talking excitedly, but no one would say what was happening. Later she noticed that next door there were sheets curtaining off the Nureyev compartment and doctors in white coats were going in and out." When Nureyev's mother, Farida, had boarded the train two weeks earlier in the Bashkiri capital of Ufa with her three daughters, she was more than eight months pregnant. She was making the long journey to join her husband, who was serving in the Red Army's Far Eastern Division. In Kavanagh's hands, the birth of Farida's fourth child—and importantly, her first and only son—reads like something out of a Russian short story, with whispers and mysterious goings-on behind quickly drawn curtains: "[Later] one or two of the women came up to the children with a large box and told them to look inside. There they saw a tiny baby swaddled tightly: 'We bought him in Ulan-Ude,' they said, laughing."

As she does elsewhere, Kavanagh allows the words of an eyewitness, or friend, or interested party, to speak for her. It is an intriguing, if somewhat tricky, technique. She weaves together the impressions of others, often—though not in this case—without identifying the person who is being quoted (their names do appear in her copious notes at the end). As a reader, one is often presented with a difficult choice: to flip back to the notes and find out who is speaking and in what context or simply to relinquish control and read on. Even so, Kavanagh manages to smooth the edges of all these interpolations, producing a harmonious whole with an internal rhythm and a clear authorial voice. But sometimes one wonders what Kavanagh herself thinks, where her opinion lies. Unlike many biographers, she is not out to prove a thesis about her subject (ah, you see, Nureyev had such a terrible temper!) but rather to give as rich an accounting as she can, integrating the voices of the people who knew him and followed his career closely. She is a generous, deeply knowledgeable and, one suspects, fair-minded narrator.

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What was so special about Nureyev? Americans, especially younger Americans (like myself), are more acquainted with Baryshnikov and his altogether different gifts. Baryshnikov was a technical marvel, a model of his Leningrad ballet school training (in 1964, at the age of 16, he entered the Kirov-affiliated Vaganova academy after four years at the rigorous Riga opera ballet school) and an embodiment of the classical ideal (despite his stature). His entire body was involved in every movement, whether small or large; more important, as Kavanagh writes, in his dancing "the virtuoso steps were only transitions in an overarching dance picture." His feather-light jumps, pristine footwork and multiple turns made one gasp, and yet did not call attention to themselves; they simply seemed so easy, so obvious, the logical continuation or culmination of a phrase or an idea. There was an intrinsic purity to his movement that was the opposite of showiness. Understatement was in fact a crucial part of his brilliance. What he brought to the stage was not his personality—though star power did play an undeniable part in the thrill—but an articulated expression of the classical steps, of the music, of the dance as a whole and maybe even of the laws of physics. Seeing him, ballet made sense, even to people who thought ballet was silly.

Nureyev was an altogether different kind of dancer. Not that he was not a virtuoso. His jumps were breathtaking, even on video, reaching both enormous elevation and breadth in space but also achieving a heart-stopping slowness. He appeared to hover in midair; he collapsed space. Watching his performances in *Giselle* and *Le Corsaire* on video makes me sad not to have been there to see him perform in his prime, when his exceptionally pliant and deep plié allowed him, as Kavanagh puts it, to "rebound in space and sit there, for several seconds." (Kavanagh's descriptions of dance reveal a deep affinity for the form—she trained in ballet and has been a dance critic for the *Spectator* as well as the London editor of both *Vanity Fair* and *The New Yorker*. She has the knack for making you "see" what a step looked like.)

Nureyev was also an instinctually innovative dancer. Having started late—he entered the Vaganova academy at 17, with mostly folk-dance experience and two years of intense but unfocused ballet studies under his belt—perhaps he was less burdened by tradition and felt free to seek his own style of movement. He also felt that he had something to prove. He was not the best student in his class, but he was perhaps the most talked about. Taking his inspiration from the soft, articulated arms and expressive upper bodies of the ballerinas, he molded his own port de bras and torso, trying to achieve a soft, decorative and expressive quality that was equal to that of his partners. This is common in male ballet dancers now, but it was considered quite shocking at the time.

He also pushed his leg higher in attitudes and arabesques, far beyond what was typical for male dancers. This, combined with the pulled-up chest and soft arms, created a more feminine, more exotic curve in his body. This again was considered quite unusual. (In the early days he was often compared to Nijinsky, who, with Diaghilev's Ballets Russes several decades earlier, had also combined virtuosity with androgyny and a kind of "Oriental" exoticism to great effect.) Nureyev took his exoticism even further by dancing with his feet in a high demi-pointe—high on the ball of the foot—instead of low to the ground, mimicking the effect of the ballerina in her toeshoes. This increased the dynamism of his stage presence; a dancer standing on the tips of his toes is poised for motion, reaching up and out into space. Even stillness becomes an exciting preparation for movement.

There was a practical reason for this aesthetic choice as well: though he was slim, with a narrow waist and broad shoulders, at five foot eight, he was not very tall, and his legs were not particularly long. His pulled-up, high-toed stance made his legs look longer and more sculpted—fetishizing his lower body. After a tantrum about his baggy costume during a performance of *Don Quixote* at the Kirov in 1960 that kept the audience waiting for nearly an hour, he also began wearing tights without the covering of the company's typical baggy trunks and set off by a short jacket. Both techniques instantly appealed to other male dancers and are now mainstream. A contemporary of Nureyev's at the Bolshoi told Kavanagh, "I thought, God! This guy is really dancing on pointe. It was so beautiful.... It was a totally different aesthetic: more beautiful and cleaner." But beyond the purely aesthetic—longer legs look nicer onstage—Nureyev's innovations, combined with his natural beauty, made his dancing more exciting, more expressive and, in a word, sexy. Before him, male dancers had been noble, elegant and strong, but Nureyev's dancing was hot. As Baryshnikov would later tell dance critic Joan Acocella, "It was very masculine and at the same time [had] a touch of the feminine.... That gave him a sort of sexuality nobody around had at that time. It was so exotic."

Nureyev's awareness of his physical beauty and its power over people is a recur-

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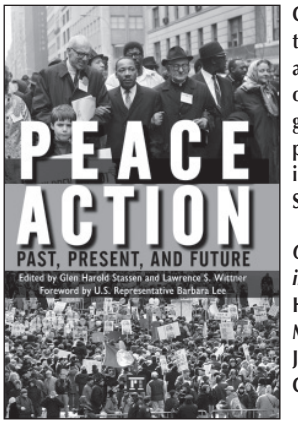
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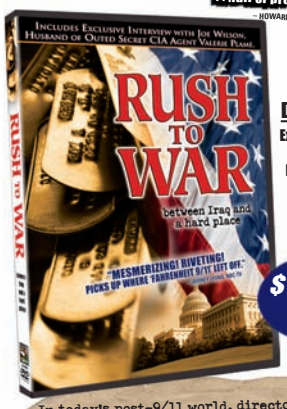
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ring theme in his dancing as well as his relationships; he enjoyed being looked at, photographed and filmed, with a voluptuousness that is both fascinating and slightly off-putting. Just look at the photograph on the cover of Kavanagh's book, one of a series taken by Richard Avedon at a steamy session in 1961: the dancer's self-awareness verges on the distasteful.

Nureyev was far from perfect as a dancer. Because of his late start, he benefited from only a few years of intensive study with the sagelike teacher Alexander Pushkin; he was still rough around the edges. His defection at 23 put a brutal end to this crucial bond with his teacher, which would never be replaced. His famous leaps had a tendency to come down in inflexible, thumpy landings. And for all his work to perfect his presentation, his dancing could be quite messy. Of his performance of the Black Swan pas de deux from *Swan Lake* at his London debut, Kavanagh writes, "Rudolf had fought his way through the virtuoso steps, landing badly and throwing both himself and [his partner] off balance." As the French ballerina Violette Verdy said, "Rudi didn't believe in covering up his difficulties."

Other observers have pointed out Nureyev's inability to bind his steps into musical phrases, to create a logical whole out of the individual parts of a solo. Instead, he tended to careen from one high point to another, ostentatiously preparing himself for the hard parts as if alerting the audience to what was coming. Effort and exhaustion were part of the show. In his view, "the art of dancing is not to make a difficult step look easy, but to make an easy step look interesting." And no one knew how to dramatize the easy steps better than he did: in his first performance of *Giselle* in London, with Margot Fonteyn, his slow, languorous traversal of the stage toward Giselle's grave, black cape billowing behind him, his face an exquisite mask of ecstatic sorrow, mesmerized the audience as much as his dancing did. But no one could accuse him of laziness. He was intensely aware of his own limitations and worked compulsively to correct them, absorbing what he could from fellow dancers (Fonteyn and Erik Bruhn, for example) and various teachers. And he did improve. Ninette de Valois, the founder of the Royal Ballet, his principal home for most of the '60s, said that "by the age of 25 his dancing was virtually perfect."

Throughout the '60s, audiences were electrified by Nureyev's performances; he became a superstar, a pop icon. But not every balletomane was convinced, especially in the United States, where the cool, technical brilliance of Balanchine was a universe away from Nureyev's "hot," attention-grabbing style. Jerome Robbins declared himself "not very impressed" after seeing Nureyev perform in Paris in 1961, and Lincoln Kirstein was a longtime skeptic, though he became obsessed with Nureyev later in life. Balanchine did not even come backstage to congratulate him after his first US performance, at the Brooklyn Academy of Music, in 1962. After Nureyev danced *Giselle* with Fonteyn in 1963 at the Metropolitan Opera House, the prominent critic John Martin accused him in the *Saturday Review* of trying to steal the show, "giving himself all the plums" in the classical repertory, always putting himself "front and center."

There was certainly some truth to Martin's accusations. Nureyev's egocentric tendencies became more explicit when, in 1963, he began restaging the classics, always with himself in the role of the prince. He began to add long, convoluted solos in order to show off aspects of his technique and augment his role in the story. Thus *Swan Lake* became the tale of a confused prince struggling to break away from the tentacles of his mother and tutor (reducing the unfortunate swan maiden to a kind of abstract metaphor for the soul), and Prince Florimund in *The Sleeping Beauty* became a charismatic, restless, Byronic seeker rather than simply the agent of Princess Aurora's awakening. Nureyev's choreography, in his adaptations and original works (most of which were unsuccessful) was florid, needlessly complicated, filled with what Acocella has described as "fiddly steps—petits battements, ronds de jambe—that go on forever without going anywhere."

The profusion of small, detailed steps was a testament to Nureyev's obsession with the Danish style of ballet, which he discovered while he was still at the Kirov, by way of a blurry 8-millimeter film captured by his friend Teja Kremke of the great Danish *danseur noble* Erik Bruhn. Kremke, an East German student at the Vaganova academy, had disappeared from the record until Kavanagh rediscovered him in the course of her research. He was apparently Nureyev's first male lover (the first of many) and seems to have had a profound effect on his emotional development. Kavanagh makes a good case for the idea that it was Kremke who planted the idea of leaving Russia. There has been much conjecture about when Nureyev began to think about leaving and whether the defection was an act

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of sudden desperation. Kavanagh does not settle the question, but the discovery of Kremke and his whisperings to Nureyev is an interesting clue. Kremke was also an amateur filmmaker who took endless footage of his friend in rehearsal and onstage, some of which was aired for the first time in a PBS/BBC documentary in August. (Hopefully, *Nureyev: The Russian Years* will soon be made available on commercial DVD—a short excerpt from it can be seen on YouTube.)

The sad story of Nureyev's young friend, who was left behind when Nureyev defected and who eventually became an alcoholic and drowned under "mysterious circumstances," may be only a small piece in the puzzle of Nureyev's life, but it is another example of Kavanagh's resourcefulness and ability to bring details to life. Kremke's film of Bruhn dancing Balanchine's *Theme and Variations* blew Nureyev's mind. It led him to his two obsessions, which could be realized only if he left Russia: to study with Bruhn and to dance for Balanchine. Balanchine all but eluded him (in the late '70s, when he was old and tired, he made an insignificant piece for Nureyev), but Nureyev did track down Bruhn in Denmark shortly after leaving Russia, studied with him, became his lover—Bruhn is generally described as "the love of his life"—replaced him in most of his roles on the international dance circuit and generally made him miserable (they broke up many times over the years, and definitively in 1968). Kavanagh tracks the implosion of their relationship closely, quoting at length from Bruhn's tortured letters. (Kavanagh is the first researcher to see these letters, which are in the hands of the Rudolf Nureyev Dance Foundation.) It is a depressing microcosm of the destructive effects of competition and stardom on intimacy and even friendship. But Nureyev's dancing, if not his choreography, was the better for having known Bruhn.

There is much, much more to this story: Nureyev's legendary partnership with Margot Fonteyn, which brought her back from the brink of retirement for some of her most memorable, expansive performances and imbued his own dancing with a new, much-needed refinement.

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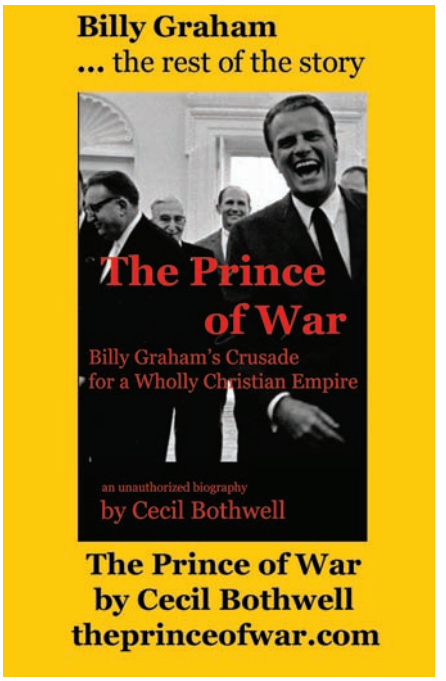

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His forays into modern dance, never very successful because he could not stop touring long enough to get the style completely into his body. (Baryshnikov described his filmed version of Roland Petit's *Le Jeune homme et la mort* as "high camp beauty parlor"; you can see an excerpt on YouTube and judge for yourself.) His frightening, almost feral behavior in and out of the theater, complete with vile insults and physical brutality: he punched, kicked, spat, broke glasses at parties and even dragged a dancer by her necklace.

Worse yet, he was cruel to Fonteyn, who was by then a hallowed figure—but she didn't seem to mind. Then there was his fraught tenure as director of the Paris Opera Ballet, where he made few friends but transformed the company by bringing in new ballet masters, rapidly promoting promising young dancers (like Sylvie Guillem) and inviting challenging choreographers (such as William Forsythe and Karole Armitage). Kavanagh depicts him as an inspiring teacher: "the messiah of pure classicism, and a molder and maker of stars." As a mentor to young dancers, she argues, he far surpassed Baryshnikov. Then, after Nureyev was pushed out of the Paris Opera and could no longer dance, there was his short career as a conductor (mediocre, it seems). He died young but stayed on the stage for far too long.

His abilities waned in the latter half of the '70s and dropped to further lows in the '80s, as his body was ravaged by the infirmities connected to HIV; he became infected in the early '80s, when little or nothing was known about the disease. But he kept on dancing, in increasingly remote locations where news of his decline had not yet arrived. By the time of his farewell tour in 1991, friends had been desperate for him to retire for years, and the reviews had become brutal. When the choreographer Flemming Flindt shared an elevator with him in Copenhagen in the late '80s, he blurted out, "I saw you in *Swan Lake* last night. It was *awful*.... You can't do it anymore. You're way too old"—and then, perversely, went on to make a ballet for him. Kavanagh describes his "hunched shoulders" and "stiff, flapping arms" during his long-awaited homecoming performance at the Kirov, in 1989. The somewhat romanticized documentary *Nureyev: Dancing Through Darkness* includes footage from the Kirov, and it is hard to watch. Mostly, he looks terribly tired, as if each arabesque was bringing him one step closer to the grave. Nureyev was under no illusions, joking about his stiff, flattened-out back in his "arabesque canapé," but he simply could not stop dancing, fearing that the minute the lights went off he would simply cease to exist. When asked by a colleague why he still pushed himself so, he answered simply, "If I stopped dancing for a minute, I'd die."

The last phase of Nureyev's life—the death-in-life of not dancing, of advanced AIDS—could be titled "The Long Farewell," and it is one of the most moving passages in Kavanagh's book. It begins in October 1992 with the performance of his final ballet for the Paris Opera, a "brilliantly paced," lavish and triumphant production of *La Bayadère* (it is available on DVD). And it ends three months later, on January 6 of the following year, once again in Paris, surrounded by his devoted, self-anointed, mostly female caretakers, as friends visit his bedside one by one, taking their leave of the grand pasha. His Quai Voltaire apartment—filled with antiques, kilim rugs and his collection of academic male nudes—had become an opulent hovel, piled with dead flowers, dirty glasses, puddles of dog pee. The windows—with their magnificent view of the Seine—were caked in grime, which he refused to have cleaned, arguing, "Who needs clean windows to die?" His despair at being laid so low, and his refusal to complain about his condition, lent him a tragic grandeur that the many years of poor performances in second-rate houses had gradually scraped away. The book ends with the image of ballerinas throwing toeshoes into his grave in the Russian cemetery of Sainte-Geneviève-des-Bois, outside Paris. One can't help but think that Nureyev, like his Albrecht in *Giselle*, would have relished the scene. ■

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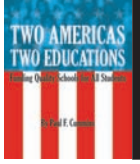
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Letters

(continued from page 2)

to task for it, the "politics of racial paroxysm" in the 1980s and '90s was largely the result of the mainstream media's hunger for conflict and their deafness to anything that comes close to a structural analysis of racial inequality. The most important work being done by grassroots black activists—with the support of a multicultural cast of left and liberal allies—focuses on issues too "boring" for the evening news, such as welfare reform, mass imprisonment, community economic development, and separate and unequal education. On race and class, Sleeper reifies a false binary distinction between the two that analysts and activists have long challenged.

In places as diverse as Philadelphia, New Haven, Greensboro and Los Angeles, civil rights and labor activists have forged alliances around issues of low-wage work, urban reinvestment and healthcare. Rustin and Harrington would have taken them seriously. We should too—rather than letting ourselves get distracted by the "impresarios of racialist street theater" and those journalists and academics like Sleeper who pay too much attention to them.

Edward Beller's take on the Ocean Hill–Brownsville crisis is shared by many of Shanker's critics. But whatever Shanker's motivations, the history of trade unionism is replete with strikes on behalf of a small number of aggrieved workers. Teachers had long suffered politically or personally motivated transfers—and fought hard for protection against them. That does not vitiate Beller's larger point about the ugly racialized nature of the strikes, their devastating consequences for race relations and Shanker's responsibility for stoking the flames.

Thomas J. Sugrue

Letter From Prison

Graterford, Pa.

Thank you for seeing to it that I receive the enlightenment of *The Nation* in this part of the American gulag. *The Nation* helps me to wake up some of my fellow prisoners and get them to have their family members vote. I also use it to help turn around a few of the guards here who vote against their own interests. Though circumstances prevent my voting, please know that your publication has helped change the voting practices of some now former Republicans and also garnered a few votes for progressive issues. I appreciate your sending me *The Nation*.

Jonathan Margoles

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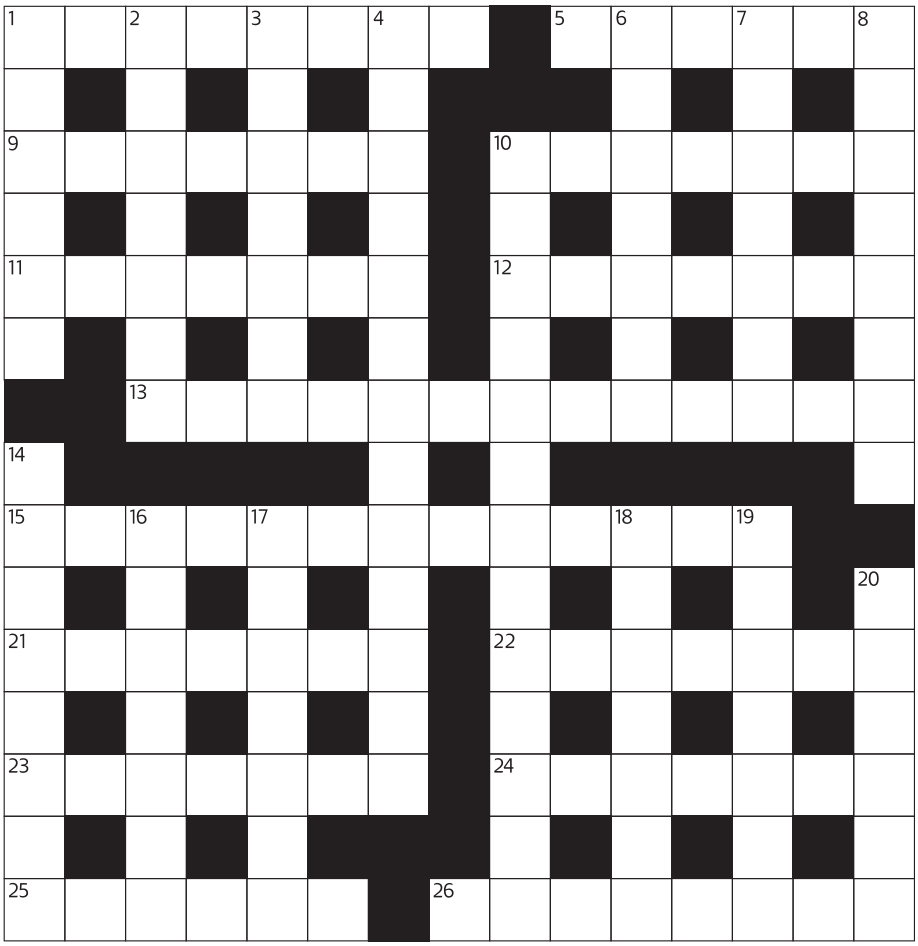

ACROSS

1 The winner of a classic race makes a wrongful act on a flower of France. (8)

5 A number with fruit might describe a certain horse. (6)

9 In favor of a word of action, according to the old saying. (7)

10 Comic routines demand quiet, as a clock does. (7)

11 External clothing to last longer than anything! (7)

12 One of the Little Women hangs around the home, as some say, being forgiven with it. (7)

13 Places you should never keep bananas, according to Chiquita. (13)

15 And places you should keep the bad ones. (13)

21 Shorter minis show what you should reach at the end. (7)

22 Possibly a set rate, if you get to sample something more than once. (7)

23 How a Roman talks! (A fine hand given!) (7)

24 The way motorists sometimes travel, making entries. (7)

25 How the old sailor might like his drink, if a trifle tipsy. (6)

26 If you're just crazy about yourself, you have it! (8)

DOWN

1 How they once went through the tulips? (6)

2 There's nothing in the worklist, but one might wake you up. (7)

3 A person's spirit, or is it just the person? (7)

4 The formal naming of a U-boat makes one lower in rank. (13)

6 The girl from the Gables comes up to put something in the pot that makes the hearing easier. (7)

7 The sort of aspic that gets so much like a painter of different things. (7)

8 One like Elia is a trying person. (8)

10 A fish having bed and breakfast might be a lot of fun! (13)

14 One of Alice's 3 R's with the "H" knocked out of it is just a story—and it has a lot of twist! (8)

16 A hodgepodge of a distant scrap, with nothing on. (7)

17 Complaining about what might be a support when taking steps? (7)

18 In the sort of time that's just about right for the meantime. (7)

19 It's a sort you find in what rises every day to keep you going. (7)

20 His age is different for one in a Japanese story. (6)

PUZZLED? No more cross words. If you don't see why "Lures" are "Ground Rules" send for those of Mr. Lewis to: Puzzled, The Nation, 33 Irving Place, New York, NY 10003, or access our website at www.thenation.com/about/crossword.mhtml.

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Y	■	O	■	X	■	A	■	L	■	A	■	I	■	E
C	H	E	A	P	E	N	■	B	E	D	E	V	I	L
E	■	R	■	E	■	D	■	A	■	I	■	I	■	A
U	N	C	E	R	E	M	O	N	I	O	U	S	L	Y
M	■	E	■	I	■	A	■	I	■	T	■	O	■	E
S	I	D	E	M	A	N	■	A	D	H	E	R	E	D
■	■	■	■	E	■	■	■	■	■	E	■	■	■	■
C	H	A	I	N	E	D	■	A	C	R	Y	L	I	C
A	■	S	■	T	■	O	■	G	■	A	■	E	■	A
P	H	I	L	A	N	T	H	R	O	P	I	S	T	S
I	■	A	■	T	■	A	■	O	■	I	■	S	■	T
T	I	T	H	I	N	G	■	U	N	S	P	O	O	L
A	■	I	■	O	■	E	■	N	■	T	■	N	■	E
L	A	C	U	N	A	S	■	D	E	S	I	S	T	S

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